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# NOTES FROM LIFE

IN

# SIX ESSAYS.

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BY

HENRY TAYLOR,

AUTHOR OF "PHILIP VAN ARTEVELDE."

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1847.

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TO

THE EARL OF ABERDEEN, K.T.,

ETC. ETC. ETC.

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED,

WITH

GREAT RESPECT AND REGARD,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

# PREFACE.

In the year 1836 I published a book called the "Statesman," a title much found fault with at the time, and in truth not very judiciously chosen. It contained the views and maxims respecting the transaction of public business, which twelve years of experience had suggested to me. But my experience had been confined within the doors of an office, and the book was wanting in that general interest which might possibly have been felt in the results of a more extensive and varied conversancy with public life. Moreover, the sub-sarcastic vein in which certain parts of it were written was not very well understood, and what was meant for an exposure of some

of the world's ways was, I believe, very generally mistaken for a recommendation of them. I advert, now, to this book and its indifferent fortunes, because whatever may have been its demerits, my present work must be regarded as to some extent comprehended in the same design,—that, namely, of embodying in the form of maxims and reflections the immediate results of an attentive observation of life,—of official life in the former volume, —of life at large in this. For more than twenty years I have been in the habit of noting these results, as they were thrown up, when the facts and occurrences that gave rise to them were fresh in my mind. A large portion of them I would more willingly have transfused into dramatic compositions. Year after year I have indulged the belief that I might find health, leisure, and opportunity for doing so, and I do not yet relinquish the hope that I may gain the time for further efforts

of that nature before I lose the faculty: but the years wear away, and though I do not hold that youth is the poet's prime, yet I feel that after youth the imagination cannot be put on and taken off with the same easy versatility,—that a continuous absorption in the dramatic theme is more indispensable to its treatment, and that, consequently, such pursuits come to be less readily combined with other avocations. Other avocations I am unable to discard, and lest, therefore, I should never be in a condition to realise a better hope, I have put into this prosaic form, such of my reflections on life as I have thought worthy in one way or another to be preserved.

MORTLAKE,
*November*, 1847.

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# ESSAYS.

## OF MONEY.

THE philosophy which affects to teach us a contempt of money does not run very deep; for, indeed, it ought to be still more clear to the philosopher than it is to ordinary men, that there are few things in the world of greater importance. And so manifold are the bearings of money upon the lives and characters of mankind, that an insight which should search out the life of a man in his pecuniary relations would penetrate into almost every cranny of his nature. He who knows, like St. Paul, both how to spare and how to abound, has a great knowledge: for if we take account of all the virtues with which money is mixed up,—honesty, justice,

any fixed and regulated manner of dealing with his net income; he knows not how much he ought to save, how much he may permit himself to spend, how much he can afford to give: whilst, even if he could know, the extreme excitements of fear and hope to which he lies open, occupy his mind too much for him to give many thoughts to such matters. And if what is called bold commercial enterprise be a thing to be rejoiced in as promoting the physical well-being of mankind, and thereby, perhaps, in the train of consequences, their moral interests, it is only through that Providence by which good is brought out of evil. And the actors in such enterprises, when, as is mostly the case, they are merely "going after gold," and not considering either the physical or moral results, are, in their own minds and hearts, "following corruption," and are likely to "have enough thereof."

A moderated and governed course in the getting of money is the more difficult, because this is, of all pursuits, that in which a man

meets with the greatest pressure of competition. So many are putting their hearts into this work, that he who keeps his out of it, is not unlikely to fare ill in the strife. And for this reason it behoves a man, not perhaps altogether to abate his desire of gain, (though this should be done if it be excessive), but more assiduously still to direct his desires beyond, and purify the desire of gain by associating with it the desire to accomplish some scheme of beneficent expenditure. And let no man imagine that the mere investment for reproduction, though economists may justly regard it as beneficial to mankind, will re-act upon his own heart for good.

George Herbert is a good counsellor on this head of money-getting:—

"Yet in thy thriving still misdoubt some evil;
Lest gaining gain on thee, and make thee dim
To all things else. Wealth is the Conjuror's Devil,
Whom, when he thinks he hath, the Devil hath him.
Gold thou may'st safely touch; but if it stick
Unto thy hands, it woundeth to the quick." *

* The Church Porch.

Secondly:—As to the *saving* of money. The saving, like the getting, should be intelligent of a purpose beyond: it should not be saving for saving's sake, but for the sake of some worthy object to be accomplished by the money saved. And there is to be especially guarded against that accumulative instinct or passion which is ready to take possession of all collectors.

Some very small portion of a man's income may perhaps be justifiably saved to make provision against undefined and unforeseen contingencies, and also to assure himself that he *can* save. But in the case of most men there will be a sufficiency of distinct and definable ends, whether certain or contingent, which will not only justify, but enjoin, the laying by of a proportion of their income. A young man may very well lay by money to enable him to be more free in the choice of a wife. A middle-aged man may lay it by in order that his old age may have fewer labours and cares or more comforts. A father may lay it by for his children. But in all these

cases, if the end be not kept steadily in view from first to last, and the means kept no more than proportionate and subordinate, there is the risk that the saver may become a miser. The young may grow old without taking a wife, and save still when he no longer thinks of marrying; or he may think that what he has saved may entitle him to a rich wife, rather than enable him to choose. The middle-aged man may reach old age with no disposition to increase his comforts and every disposition to increase his hoard. And finally, the father, though his motive for saving is the most natural and universal, and in general the most warrantable of all, may yet be betrayed by the very largeness of the allowance which the world makes in such cases, into avaricious errors. His case, as being the most common and that in which men are least on their guard, deserves to be the more closely considered.

The prudent parent is less likely to be corrupted into a covetous parent, if he be saving for several children, than if it be for one

only child, or for an eldest son: for avarice projects itself more readily in the singular number than in the plural; and saving for a provision is always to be distinguished from saving for aggrandisement, which is no other than a form of avarice. Saving for an only child or eldest son may be defended when the father has means beyond the devisable patrimony, and when that devisable patrimony is insufficient for the station to be inherited along with it. But if the patrimony be insufficient, and the father have *no* extrinsic means, he must not make it more insufficient in *his* lifetime, in order that it may be less insufficient in his son's: he is not to be niggardly in order that his son may be liberal. He may indeed retrench in matters connected with the keeping up of appearances—that is, he may ostensibly retire from his station for a time, or for life; but he must not, whilst keeping up the appearances of his station, fall short in matters of bounty and liberality.

In saving for younger children, the parent has to consider what is a competency; and if

he be wise, and can count upon an average share of health and abilities in his younger sons, he will not relieve them from the necessity of earning the main part of their livelihood; for unless a man's property be large enough to find him an occupation in the management of it and in the discharge of the duties incident to it, (which generally speaking can only be the case of the eldest son,) it will be essential to his happiness that he should have to work for his bread. And it is on this fact that the custom of succession according to primogeniture is to be defended; for if any one is sacrificed by this custom, it is rather the eldest than the younger sons; the eldest being too often pampered into self-love,—the most wretched inheritance of all,—the younger being trained in self-sacrifice, fortified in self-reliance, and through industry and progress leading a wiser, a better, a more generous, and a happier life.

How much to save for a *daughter* is another question; and since a woman's life for the most part turns upon her marriage, it is her

matrimonial prospects which are principally to be regarded. Let not her wealth be too tempting: an heiress has a large assortment of suitors, and yet an ill choice: and do not, if you can help it, let her poverty be an obstruction; for prudent men make good husbands, and in most cases a man cannot marry with prudence where there is not the fair facility of a moderate fortune. I have heard, indeed, of a father who stinted his daughters' dowries on purpose that poor men might not be able to marry them; whence he inferred that rich men would. He might be mistaken in his inference; for though rich men can *afford* to marry poor maids, yet men are not found to wish less for money because they want it less, and in the making of marriages it is generally seen that "wealth will after kind." Even if he were not mistaken, however, the calculation was but a sordid one at the best; and considering how many requisites must be combined to make a good husband and a happy marriage, the father is likely to impose a cruel limitation of choice who needlessly adds wealth to the number of essentials.

Even the marriage which is poor through an improvident choice, is less likely to end ill than that which is rich through a constrained choice.

There is yet another domestic object which may be a fair ground for saving out of a patrimony. One of the incidents of the law and custom of primogeniture to which our natural feelings are the least easily reconciled, is the effect of it upon the wife and mother when she passes into widowhood. She is deposed from her station and deprived of her affluence at the moment of her greatest domestic calamity, and her own child is the person to whom they are transferred. It may be that the cares, duties and responsibilities of a large property and a high proprietary station, are not suitable to a widow in the decline of life: but this is not left for her to determine, and very frequently the still less acceptable cares of a straitened income and a total change in her mode of life are fixed upon her. The force of custom has brought the feelings of mankind into more

accordance than one would have thought possible with so unnatural an arrangement; but the husband needs not to be charged with parsimony who should save money with a view to mitigate the future contrast between his wife's position and his widow's.

Thirdly:—As to the *spending* of money.

The art of living easily as to money, is to pitch your scale of living one degree below your means. Comfort and enjoyment are more dependent upon easiness in the detail of expenditure, than upon one degree's difference in the scale.

Guard against false associations of pleasure with expenditure,—the notion that because pleasure can be purchased with money, therefore money cannot be spent without enjoyment. What a thing costs a man is no true measure of what it is worth to him; and yet how often is his appreciation governed by no other standard, as if there were a pleasure in expenditure *per se*.

Let yourself feel a want before you provide against it: You are more assured that it is

a real want; and it is worth while to feel it a little, in order to feel the relief from it.

When you are undecided as to which of two courses you would like best, choose the cheapest. This rule will not only save money, but save also a good deal of trifling indecision.

Too much leisure leads to expense; because when a man is in want of objects, it occurs to him that they are to be had for money; and he invents expenditures in order to pass the time.

A thoroughly conscientious mode of regulating expenditure implies much care and trouble in resisting imposition, detecting fraud, preventing waste, and doing what in you lies to guard the honesty of your stewards, servants, and tradesmen, by not leading them into temptation but delivering them from evil. A man who should be justly sensible of the duties involved in expenditure and determined to discharge them, would find the burthen of them heavy; and instead of having a pleasure in expense, he would probably

desire as much as might be to avoid the trouble of it. We sometimes hear rich men charged with parsimony because they look minutely to differences of cost; but if they are spending their money in a right spirit, the question they have to consider is, not whether the sum is of importance to themselves, but whether it is right or wrong that it should be given and taken.

Young men, instead of undertaking the disagreeable office of checking accounts, are often inclined to lay out a good deal of money in the purchase of bows and smiles, which they mistake for respect. It is only the right and just payment that commands real respect: and the obsequious extortioner, well understanding the weakness on which he practises, will often repay himself for his own servility, not only in money, but in secret contempt for his dupe.

Prodigality is indeed the vice of a weak nature, as avarice is of a strong one; it comes of a weak craving for those blandishments of the world which are easily to be had

for money, and which, when obtained, are as much worse than worthless as a harlot's love is worse than none.

"Thrice happy he whose nobler thoughts despise
To make an object of so easy gains;
Thrice happy he who scorns so poor a prize
Should be the crown of his heroic pains:
Thrice happy he who ne'er was born to try
Her frowns or smiles; or being born, did lie
In his sad nurse's arms an hour or two, and die."*

Fourthly:—As to *giving and taking.* All giving is not generous; and the gift of a spendthrift is seldom given in generosity; for prodigality is, equally with avarice, a selfish vice: nor can there be a more spurious view of generosity than that which has been often taken by sentimental comedians and novelists, when they have represented it in combination with recklessness and waste. He who gives only what he would as readily throw away, gives without generosity; for the essence of generosity is in self-sacrifice. Waste, on the contrary, comes always by self-indulgence;

* Quarles.

and the weakness and softness in which it begins will not prevent the hard-heartedness to which all selfishness tends at last. The mother of Gertruda

> "In many a vigil of her last sick bed,
> Bid her beware of spendthrifts as of men
> That seeming in their youth not worse than light,
> Would end not so, but with the season change;
> For Time, she said, which makes the serious soft,
> Turns lightness into hardness."

When you give, therefore, take to yourself no credit for generosity, unless you deny yourself something in order that you *may* give.

I have known a man who was never rich, and was indeed in a fair way to be ruined, make a present of several hundred pounds, under what he probably conceived to be an impulse of generous friendship: but if that man had been called upon to get up an hour earlier in the morning to serve his friend, I do not believe that he would have done it. The fact was that he had no real value for money, no real care for consequences which

were not to be immediate: in parting with some hundreds of pounds he flattered his self-love with a show of self-sacrifice; in parting with an hour's folding of the hands to sleep, the self-sacrifice would have been real, and the show of it not very magnificent.

Again, do not take too much credit even for your self-denial, unless it be cheerfully and genially undergone. Do not dispense your bounties only because you know it to be your duty, and are afraid to leave it undone: for this is one of those duties which should be done more in the spirit of love than in that of fear. I have known persons who have lived frugally, and spent a large income almost entirely in acts of charity and bounty, and yet with all this they had not the open hand. When the act did not define itself as a charitable duty, the spirit of the God-beloved giver was wanting, and they failed in all those little genial liberalities towards friends, relatives, and dependents, which tend to cultivate the sympathies and kindnesses of our nature

quite as much as charity to the poor or munificence in the contribution to public objects.

The kindness from which a gift proceeds will appear in the choice as well as in the cost of it. I have known a couple who married on 400*l.* a year, receive three carriages as wedding gifts, they being unable of course to keep one. The donors had been thinking rather of what would do credit to themselves, than of what would be serviceable and acceptable.

When gifts proceed from public bodies, communities, or high functionaries, in the way of testimonials, and are to do honour to the party receiving them, they should if possible assume a shape in which they will be seen without being shown.

There is often as much generosity in accepting gifts as there can be in bestowing them,—the generosity of a nature which stands too strong in its humility to fear humiliation, which knows its own independence, and is glad to be grateful.

Upon a very different sense of generosity are some of the practices of the present time founded. It is not an uncommon thing amongst some persons, with peculiar notions of doing things delicately, for contributions to be conveyed to some decayed gentlewoman under various pretences which are meant to disguise, more or less transparently, the fact that she receives money in charity. Some wretched products of her pencil, which would not command one penny in the market, are privately sold for five shillings a piece, and the proceeds are paid to her as if she had earned them; or a few deplorable verses are stitched together and disposed of in the same manner. It is surely impossible to take a more unworthy view of what should be the character and spirit of a gentlewoman, than that which this sort of proceeding implies. If a gentlewoman be in want, she should say so with openness, dignity, and truth, and accept in the manner that becomes a gentlewoman, in all lowliness but without the slightest

humiliation or shame, whatever money she has occasion for and others are willing to bestow. The relations between her and them will in that case admit of respect on the one side and gratitude on the other. But where false and juggling pretences are resorted to, no worthy or honest feeling can have place. Delicacy is a strong thing; and whether in giving or taking, let us always maintain the maxim, that what is most sound and true is most delicate.

There are some other ways of the world in this matter of charity, which proceed, I think, upon false principles and feelings, —charity dinners, charity balls, charity bazaars, and so forth; devices (not even *once* blessed) for getting rid of distress without calling out any compassionate feeling in those who give or any grateful feeling in those who receive. God sends misery and misfortune into the world for a purpose; they are to be a discipline for His creatures who endure, and also for His creatures who

behold them. In *those* they are to give occasion for patience, resignation, the spiritual hopes and aspirations which spring from pain when there comes no earthly relief, or the love and gratitude which earthly ministrations of relief are powerful to promote. In *these* they are to give occasion for pity, self-sacrifice, and devout and dutiful thought, subduing—for the moment at least—the light, vain, and pleasure-loving motions of our nature. If distress be sent into the world for these ends, it is not well that it should be shuffled out of the world without any of these ends being accomplished; and still less that it should be made the occasion of furthering ends in some measure opposite to these; that it should be danced away at a ball, or feasted away at a dinner, or dissipated at a bazaar. Better were it in my mind, that misery should run its course with nothing but the mercy of God to stay it, than that we should thus corrupt our charities.

Let me not be misunderstood. Feasting

and dancing, in themselves and by themselves, I by no means disparage; there is a time and a place for them; but things which are excellent at one time and occasion, are a mere desecration at another. It is much more easy to desecrate our duties than to consecrate our amusements; and better therefore not to mix them up with each other.

Another modern mode is to raise a subscription by shillings or pennies,—fixing the contribution at so low a sum that nobody can care whether they give it or not, and collecting it in the casual intercourse of society. This is a less vitiated mode than the others, being of a more negative character: but if the others are corrupted charity, this is no better than careless charity.

Lastly, there is a rule in giving which is often overlooked by those whose generosity is not sufficiently thoughtful and severe. Generosity comes to be perverted from its uses when it ministers to selfishness in others; and it should be our care to give all

needful support to our neighbour in his self-denial, rather than to bait a trap for his self-indulgence; in short, to give him pleasure only when it will do him good, not when sacrifices on our part are the correlatives of abuses on his; for he who pampers the selfishness of another, does that other a moral injury which cannot be compensated by any amount of gratification imparted to him.

> "Give thou to no man, if thou wish him well,
> What he may not in honour's interest take;
> Else shalt thou but befriend his faults, allied
> Against his better with his baser self."

Amongst the questionable acts which are done from generous motives, is the not uncommon one of a son and heir in tail paying the debts of a prodigal father deceased, out of property which the father had no right to appropriate. There may be instances in which such an act would be worthy of all praise; but perhaps the cases are not few in which the effect is purely pernicious, enabling a spendthrift to squander another's inheritance in addition to his own; for the

frequency of the practice leads money-lenders and others to calculate on the chances.

The motive of the son is the pious and commendable one of shielding a parent's memory from disgrace. But how far is this end accomplished? The selfishness which is the ground of disgrace, is the same whether it be the heir or the creditor that suffers by it. The heir may suffer in silence, and the sting of personal damage may make the creditor cry out; but in every just judgment the shame and dishonour attaching to the memory of the dead man should be measured by what he did when he was alive, and not by the silence or outcry ensuing; and it is hardly a high view of moral assoilment, which can regard with much complacency the mere stifling of reproaches and hushing up of a parent's memory. In many cases, therefore, the weak and careless, or interested and usurious creditor, should be left to bear his loss when his debtor dies insolvent. Still our philosophy is not to put Nature out of office; and if the prodigality of the parent

have been merely one of the infirmities of "a frail good man," and if the conduct of the creditor have not been grossly culpable, natural feeling should take its course, and the blessing will be upon Shem and Japhet rather than upon Ham.

Fifthly:—As to *lending* and *borrowing*.

Never lend money to a friend unless you are satisfied that he does wisely and well in borrowing it. Borrowing is one of the most ordinary ways in which weak men sacrifice the future to the present, and thence is it that the gratitude for a loan is so proverbially evanescent: for the future, becoming present in its turn, will not be well-pleased with those who have assisted in doing it an injury. By conspiring with your friend to defraud his future self, you naturally incur his future displeasure. Take to heart, therefore, the admonition of the ancient courtier:—

> "Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
> For loan oft loseth both itself and friend,
> And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry." *

* Shakespeare.

To withstand solicitations for loans is often a great trial of firmness; the more especially as the pleas and pretexts alleged are generally made plausible at the expense of truth; for nothing breaks down a man's truthfulness more surely than pecuniary embarrassment—

> "An unthrift was a liar from all time;
> Never was debtor that was not deceiver."

The refusal which is at once the most safe from vacillation, and perhaps as little apt to give offence as any, is the point blank refusal, without reasons assigned. Acquiescence is more easily given in the decisions of a strong will, than in reasons, which weak men, under the bias of self-love, will always imagine themselves competent to controvert.

Some men will lend money to a friend in order, as it were, to purchase a right of remonstrance: but the right so purchased is worth nothing. You may buy the man's ears, but not his heart or his understanding.

I have never known a debtor or a prodigal who was not, in his own estimation, an injured man: and I have generally found that those

who had not suffered by them were disposed to side with them; for it is the weak who make the outcry, and it is by the outcry that the world is wont to judge. They who lend money to spendthrifts should be prepared, therefore, to suffer in their reputation as well as in their purse. Let us learn from the Son of Sirach:—"Many, when a thing was lent them, reckoned it to be found, and put them to trouble that helped them. Till he hath received, he will kiss a man's hand; and for his neighbour's money he will speak submissly; but when he should repay, he will prolong the time, and return words of grief, and complain of the time. If he prevail he shall hardly receive the half, and he will count as if he had found it; if not, he hath deprived him of his money, and he hath gotten him an enemy without cause: he payeth him with cursings and railings, and for honour he will pay him disgrace."

It is a common reproach with which mankind assails mankind, that those who fall into poverty are forsaken by their friends:—

"Ay, quoth Jacques,
Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens;
'Tis just the fashion: wherefore do you look
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?" *

But before the friends of the poor be condemned, it would be well to inquire whether their poverty have been honestly come by; and I believe it would very rarely be found that a person in a fair condition of life is allowed to sink unassisted into extreme indigence without some serious fault and offence: and the person having so sunk, it will be found to be still more rarely the case that the pressure of poverty is not too strong for his character. It is when the character has given way, that poverty is deserted: for pity and affection divorced from respect, lose the main element of their strength and permanency.

The ordinary course of things, then, is as follows:—*A* becoming embarrassed, through some (perhaps venial) imprudence, is kindly assisted by his friends, *B*, *C*, and *D*; who, however, do not altogether approve his conduct, but think it would be ungenerous in

* "As You Like It," Act ii. Scene 1.

them, under the protection of the favours they are conferring, to assail him with reproaches. So far all goes smoothly between *A* on the one hand, and *B*, *C*, *D*, on the other. But *A*, having, by the loans he has received, staved off any immediate consequences of his imprudence, is under a rather stronger temptation than before to forego the severe self-denial which would set him right again. He has now broken the ice in the matter of asking favours; he has incurred whatever humiliation belongs to it; and having begged once, it costs him comparatively little to beg again. This process of begging and borrowing goes on therefore, becoming continually more frequent and less efficacious; and as the borrower grows less and less scrupulous, he nourishes his pride (the ordinary refuge of those who lose their independence) and resents every repulse as an insult. *B*, *C*, and *D* then discover that they are not to be thanked for what they have lent, but rather reproached for not lending more and more; whereupon they withdraw their friendship;

and those who ignorantly look on, or perhaps hear the story of *A*, whilst *B*, *C*, and *D* are silent out of consideration for him, make remarks on inconstancy in friendship and the manner in which men are forsaken in their adversity and distress.

The desertion by friends, however well merited, leads the embarrassed man to consider himself as a castaway, and throw himself into still more reckless and shameless courses; and on the part of men in this condition there is sometimes seen a perfect infatuation of extravagance, which seems to proceed from the delusions of a disordered mind and a sort of fascination in ruin. Such men come to have a repugnance to spare expense, because it brings the feeling of their difficulties home to them; and a relief in profuseness, because it seems for the moment to renounce the very notion of embarrassment. The end may be short of the gallows (for in our days the gallows has fallen out of favour), but it will scarcely be short of a punishment worse than death: for men will not tolerate

in its necessary consequences that to which they are very indulgent in its inchoation; and the "unfortunate debtor" who was cockered with compassion whilst he was in that stage of his existence, is regarded with just indignation and abhorrence when he has passed into that of the desperate outcast: though it may be as much in the course of nature that the one stage should follow the other, as that a tadpole, if he lives, should grow to be a toad.

Creditors have always been an obnoxious people, and in divers times and countries the laws which have awarded imprisonment for insolvent debt have shared in their unpopularity. But when we trace debt in its consequences and look to all the social evils which have their root in it, and when we consider that in moral as well as in physical therapeutics, the principle of withstanding commencements is all-important, we may well, I think, bring ourselves to believe that insolvent debt should be regarded as presumably criminal, and unless proved to be otherwise, should fall within the visitations of penal law.

There remains only to be considered,

Sixthly:—The subject of *bequeathing*: and some topics which might have fallen under this head have been anticipated in treating of motives for saving.

To make a will in one way or another is of course the duty of every person whose heir-at-law is not the proper inheritor of all he possesses: and unless where there is some just cause for setting them aside, expectations generated by the customs of the world are sufficient to establish a moral right to inherit and to impose a corresponding obligation to bequeath. For custom may be presumed, in the absence of any reasons to the contrary, to have grown out of some natural fitness; and at all events it will have brought about an amount of adaptation which is often sufficient, as regards individual cases, to make a fitness where there was none. Unless in exceptional instances, therefore, in which special circumstances are of an over-ruling force, the disappointment of expectations growing out of custom is not to be inflicted

without some very strong and solid reasons for believing that the custom needs to be reformed. If there be such reasons, by all means let the custom be disregarded, all expectations to the contrary notwithstanding—

> "What custom wills, in all things should we do't,
> The dust on antique time would lie unswept,
> And mountainous error be too highly heaped
> For truth to overpeer."*

But the presumption should be always held to be in favour of custom, and he who departs from it without the plea of special circumstances should be able to find in himself a competency to correct the errors of mankind.

If it be not well for the natural or customary heirs that they should be disappointed, neither is it good for those to whom an inheritance is diverted, that wealth should come upon them by surprise. Sudden and unexpected accessions of wealth seldom promote the happiness of those to whom they accrue; and they are for the most part

* "Coriolanus," Act ii. Scene 3.

morally injurious; especially when they accrue by undue deprivation of another.

But some part of the property of most people, and a large part, or even the whole of the property of some people, may not be the subject of just or natural expectations on the part of customary heirs; and in respect of such property there is a great liberty of judgment on the part of the testator, though it is to be a grave and responsible, not a capricious liberty. The testator has to consider to whom the property will bring a real increase of enjoyment without increase of temptation; and in whose hands it is likely most to promote the happiness of others. In general the rule of judgment should be to avoid lifting people out of one station into another; and to aim at making such moderate additions to moderate fortunes in careful hands as may not disturb the proportion of property to station,—or still better, may rectify any disproportion, and enable those who are living with a difficult frugality to live with a free frugality.

This rule is not, I fear, very generally regarded; for mere rectitude, and the observation of measures and proportions, does not much lay hold of the minds of men. On the contrary, there is a general disposition to add to anything which affects the imagination by its magnitude; and there is also in some people a sort of gloating over great wealth, which infects them with a propensity to feed a bloated fortune. Jacques took note of this when he saw the deer that was weeping in "the needless stream":—

> "Thou mak'st a testament
> As worldlings do, giving thy sum of more
> To that which had too much." *

Thus it is that in the most solemn acts which men have to perform in the management of their money—in those too from which selfish ends seem most removed—they will often appear to be as little sensible of moral motives and righteous responsibilities as in any other transactions; and even a *testator*

* "As You Like It," Act ii. Scene 1.

*jamjam morituras* will dictate his will with a sort of posthumous cupidity, and seem to desire that his worldliness should live after him.

## OF HUMILITY AND INDEPENDENCE.

I propose to treat of these jointly, because I regard them as inseparably connected in life. We shall find, I think, on looking below the surface, that Humility is the true mother and nurse of Independence; and that Pride, which is so often supposed to stand to her in that relation, is, in reality, the step-mother, by whom is wrought—*novercalibus odiis*—the very destruction and ruin of Independence.

For pride has a perpetual reference to the estimation in which we are holden by others; fear of opinion is of the essence of it; and with this fear upon us it is impossible that we should be independent. The proud man is of all men the most vulnerable; and as there is nothing that rankles and festers more than

wounded pride, he has much cause for fear. Pride, therefore—whether active or passive—whether it goes forth to claim the deference of mankind, or secludes itself from the danger of their disrespect—has always much at stake, and leads a life of caution and solicitude. Humility, on the contrary, has no personal objects, and leads its life in "the service which is perfect freedom."

An uneasy, jealous, or rebellious feeling in regard to ranks and degrees, argues this want of independence through defect of humility. It is the feeling of a man who makes too much account of such things. A begrudging of rank and station, and refusal of such deference as the customs of the world have conceded to them, will generally be found to proceed from the man who secretly overvalues them, and who, if himself in possession of them, would stretch his pretensions too far. For plebeian pride and aristocratic pride issue from one and the same source in human nature. An illiberal self-love is at the bottom of both.

When low-born men of genius, like Burns the poet, maintain the superiority of intrinsic worth to adventitious distinction, we can readily go along with them so far: but when they reject the claims of social rank and condition in a spirit of defiance and resentment, as if suffering a personal injury, we may very well question whether they have not missed of the independence at which they aimed: for had their independence been genuine, they would have felt that all they possessed which was valuable was inalienable; and having nothing to lose by the social superiority of the better born, they would have made them welcome to it as being perhaps a not inequitable compensation for the comparatively small share bestowed on them of intellectual gifts and abilities.

If equality be what these men of independence would contend for, it can only be had (if at all) by the balance of what is adventitious: for natural equality there is none. If personal merit be what they regard, this, at least, will not found any claim for

intellectual endowments to be preferred to accidents of station. There is no more of personal merit in a great intellect than in a great estate. It is the use which is made of the one and of the other, which should found the claim to respect; and the man who has it at heart to make the best use he can of either, will not be much occupied with them as a means of commanding respect. Thus it is that respect is commonly least due, as well as least willingly accorded, where it is arrogated most, and that independence is hardly possessed where it is much insisted on. "The proud man," says St. Jerome, "(who "is the poor man) braggeth outwardly, but "beggeth inwardly." The humble man, who thinks little of his independence, is the man who is strong in it; and he who is not solicitous of respect will commonly meet with as much as he has occasion for. "Who calls?" says the old shepherd in "As you Like it;" "Your betters," is the insolent answer: and what is the shepherd's rejoinder? "Else are "they very wretched." By what retort,

reprisal, or repartee, could it have been made half so manifest that the insult had lighted upon armour of proof. Such is the invincible independence of humility.

The declaration of our Saviour that the meek shall inherit the earth, may be understood, I think, as verified in the very nature and attributes of meekness. The *dross* of the earth the meek do *not* inherit; the *damnosa hæreditas* of the earth's pomps and vanities descends to others: but all the true enjoyments, the wisdom, love, peace, and independence, which earth can bestow, are assured to the meek as inherent in their meekness. "'Tis in ourselves that we are "thus or thus." It depends on our own hearts to cast off the bondage of pride with all its chains and sores, and by meekness to possess the earth. For this possession comes not by observation and saying "Lo! here, or Lo! there:"* But as the Kingdom of God is within us, so also is the inheritance of the Earth:

* Luke xvii, 21.

"How much that Genius boasts as her's,
And fancies her's alone,
On you, Meek Spirits, Faith confers!
The proud have further gone,
Perhaps, through life's deep maze, but you
Alone possess the labyrinth's clue.

"To you the costliest spoils of thought,
Wisdom, unclaimed, yields up;
To you the far-sought pearl is brought,
And melted in your cup.
To you her nard and myrrh she brings,
Like orient gifts to infant kings.

"The single eye alone can see
All truths around us thrown,
In their eternal unity;
The humble ear alone
Has room to hold, and time to prize,
The sweetness of life's harmonies." *

If distinctions of rank, order, and degree were of no other use in the world, they might be desired for the exercise which they give to a generous humility, on the part of those who have them and of those who have them not. The inequality of relation should cultivate this virtue on both sides; those who have

* Aubrey De Vere; Waldenses, and other poems, p. 165.

the superiority being disposed to prize it at no more than its worth; those who have it not, being glad to recognise superiority in others, even in this its least substantial form—

"Cloth of gold, be not too nice,
Though thou be match'd with cloth of frieze.
Cloth of frieze be not too bold,
Though thou be match'd with cloth of gold."*

Here are two humilities enjoined; that which in a superior forgets superiority—that which in an inferior remembers inferiority: and neither could have place without difference of rank and degree.

When the social distinctions indicate power and a governing authority, the relations between the parties are still more pregnant with occasions for the exercise of humility. From humility there will result, not only on the one side a generous care and consideration in the use of power, but likewise on the other, what may be called a generous submission. For though the world may be more aware of

* Old Saw.

generosity shown in the exercise of power, there is a generosity also in the spirit of obedience, when it is cordial, willing, and free; and this is the case only when the nature is humble.

It is indeed chiefly in our intercourse with equals and superiors that our humility is put to the proof. When the "*Servus Servorum*" at Rome washes, according to annual usage, the feet of some poor pilgrims, the ceremony, if it be held to typify humility, should at the same time be understood to be typical of the easiest of all humilities. If the same personage were to hold the stirrup of an emperor, the proceeding would be typical of another degree of humility,—and one to which the Potentates of the Earth could not bear witness in his predecessors. Many people are gentle and forbearing with those placed under them, but proud and quarrelsome in their dealings with those above them. Where humility is wanting, there may be much submission without generosity, or, on the other hand, much resistance without an independent

spirit. The disposition to submit to authority unduly, and where the interests of others or our own are unjustly injured, will never arise out of humility; it will always arise out of those worldly anxieties from which the humble heart is exempt. The disposition to resist authority from personal feelings, where no duty dictates the resistance, will never proceed from a genuine spirit of independence; for the heart is not independent which is engaged in a struggle for personal objects. And whether submitting or resisting, humility and independence will still be found to go together; but they will for the most part be found to be favoured by submission; for the pride of the human heart, which is commonly called up by resistance even when not undue, is in like manner abated by submission, even when carried too far; and wherever pride is abated, the heart is raised and purified and made free. Elevation, therefore, is chiefly to be found in submission—"Govern them and lift them up."

Humility, like most other virtues, has its credit a good deal shaken by the number of counterfeits that are abroad. Amongst the false humilities by which the world is most flattered and beguiled, is that of the professor in this kind who shrinks from all censure and reprobation of what is evil, under cover of the text, "judge not lest ye be judged;" as if it were the intent of that text, not to warn us against rash, presumptuous and uncharitable judgments, but absolutely to forbid our taking account of the distinction between right and wrong. "It is not for us to judge our brother," says the humilitarian of this way of thinking; "we know not how he may have been tempted; perhaps he was born with stronger passions than other people; it may have been that he was ill brought up; peradventure he was thrown amongst evil associates; we ourselves, had we been placed in the same circumstances, might have been in like manner led astray." Such are the false charities of a false and popular humility. If we are

to excuse all the moral evil that we can account for, and abstain from judging all of which we can suppose that there is some adequate explanation, where are we to stop in our absolutions? Whatever villany exists in the world is compounded of what is inborn and what comes by circumstance; there is nothing so base or detestable but it is the consequence of some adequate cause; and if we are to make allowances for all but causeless wickedness, there is an end of condemnation.

The man of true humility, on the contrary, will not spare the vices and errors of his fellow-creatures, any more than he would his own; he will exercise manfully and without fear or favour, those judicial functions which God has committed in some greater or less degree to every member of the human community; but he will come to the task, on serious occasions, not lightly or unawed, but praying to have "a right judgment in all things;" and whilst exercising that judgment in no spirit of compromise or evasion, he will

feel that to judge his brother is a duty and not a privilege; and he will judge him in sorrow, humbled by the contemplation of that fallen nature of which he is himself part and parcel.

There is a current and a natural opinion, that a man has no right to censure in others a fault with which he is himself chargeable. But even this limitation is founded, I think, upon the same erroneous notion, of moral censure being an honourable privilege instead of a responsible function, a franchise instead of a due. No faults are better known and understood by us than those whereof we have ourselves been guilty; none, surely, should be so personally obnoxious to us as those by which we have ourselves been defiled and degraded: and may we not, therefore, be expected to be quick in perceiving them, and to regard them with a peculiar bitterness, rather than to overlook them in others? I would answer, assuredly yes: but always with this proviso—that to bitterness of censure should be added confession and

humiliation and the bitterness of personal shame and contrition. Without this the censure is not warrantable, because it is not founded upon a genuine moral sense; it is not, indeed, sincere: for though the offence may be worthy of all disgust and abhorrence, that abhorrence and disgust cannot be really felt by those who have committed the like offence themselves without shame or repentance.

Besides the false humility under cover of which we desert the duty of censuring our fellow-creatures, there are others by which we evade or pervert that of censuring ourselves. The most common of the spurious humilities of this kind, is that by which a general language of self-disparagement is substituted for a distinct discernment and specific acknowledgment of our real faults. The humble individual of this class will declare himself to be very incontestably a miserable sinner; but at the same time there is no particular fault or error that can be imputed to him from which he will not find himself

to be happily exempt. Each item is severally denied; and the acknowledgment of general sinfulness turns out to have been an unmeaning abstraction—a sum total of cyphers. It is not thus that the Devil makes up his accounts.

Another way is to confess faults from which we are tolerably free, being perhaps chargeable with no larger a share of them than is common to humanity, whilst we pass over the sins which are more peculiarly and abundantly our own. Real humility will not teach us any undue severity, but *truthfulness* in self-judgment. "My Son, glorify thy soul in meekness, and give it honour according to the dignity thereof."* For undue self-abasement and self-distrust will impair the strength and independence of the mind, which, if accustomed to have a just satisfaction with itself where it may, will the better bear to probe itself, and will lay itself open with the more fortitude to intimations of its

* Ecclesiasticus, x. 28.

weakness on points in which it stands truly in need of correction. No humility is thoroughly sound which is not thoroughly truthful. The man who brings misdirected or inflated accusations against himself, does so in a false humility, and will probably be found to indemnify himself on one side or another. Either he takes a pride in his supposed humility; or escaping in his self-condemnations from the darker into the lighter shades of his life and nature, he plays at hide and seek with his conscience.

And true humility, being a wise virtue, will deal more in self-examination and secret contrition than in confession. For confession is often a mere luxury of the conscience,—used as the epicures of ancient Rome would use an emetic and a warm bath before they sat down to a feast. It is often also a very snare to the maker of it and a delusion practised on the party to whom it is made. For, first, the faults may be such as words will not adequately explain; secondly, the plea of "guilty" shakes judgment in her seat;

thirdly, the indulgence shown to confession might be better bestowed on the shame which conceals; for this tends to correction, whereas confession will many times stand instead of penitence to the wrong-doer; and sometimes even a sorrowful penitence stands in the place of amendment, and is washed away in its own tears.

There is a frivolous practice of confession, much used in certain classes of society, by which young ladies or others, in the earlier moments of a friendship, take out a license to talk of themselves. In the confessionals of the ball-room, much superfluity of naughtiness is mutually disclosed, by persons who might have been better employed in dancing than in confessing. This needs not to be very severely noticed; yet it points to an infirmity against which it may be well to be on our guard; and when the occasion is sufficiently serious, we should take care that our confessions are free from any egoistical taint.

Of all false humilities the most false is to be found in that meeting of extremes wherein

humility is corrupted into pride. John Wesley, when he was desirous to fortify his followers against ridicule, taught them to court it. "God forbid," said he, "that we should not be the laughing-stock of mankind!" But it is through pride, and not in humility, that any man will desire to be a laughing-stock. And though it may seem at first sight that he has attained to an independence of mankind when he can brave their laughter, yet this is a fallacious appearance: it will be found that in so far as his humility was corrupted, his independence was undermined; and whilst courting the ridicule of the world, he is in reality courting the admiration and applause of his party or sect, or fearing their rebuke. This is the dependence into which he has fallen, and there is probably no slavery of the heart which is comparable to that of sectarian pride. Moreover Mr. Wesley's followers doubtless deemed that the laughers were in danger of hell-fire. Where then was their charity when they desired to be laughed at

by all mankind? Or if (without desiring it) they deemed mankind, themselves only excepted, to be in so reprobate a state, that the religious must needs be a laughing-stock, —was this their humility? I wish to speak of Mr. Wesley with respect, not to say reverence: but in this instance I think that his appeal was made to a temper of mind in his followers which was not purely Christian. It is not the meek who will throw out this sort of challenge and defiance: and it is pride and not humility which we shall find to lie at the bottom of any such ostentatious self-abasement—

> "For Pride,
> Which is the Devil's toasting-fork, doth toast
> Him brownest that his whiteness vaunteth most."

## OF CHOICE IN MARRIAGE.

"WHAT do you think of marriage?" says the Duchess of Malfy in Webster's play, and Antonio answers—

> "I take it as those that deny purgatory;
> It locally contains or heaven or hell;
> There is no third place in it."

When I was young and inexperienced in wives, I did not take the same view of marriage which Antonio took. I used to say that there were two kinds of marriages, with either of which a man might be content; the one "the incorporate existence marriage," the other "the pleasant additament marriage." For I thought that if a man could not command a marriage by which all interests would be deepened, all objects exalted, rewards and forfeitures doubled and far more than

doubled, and all the comparatives of life turned into superlatives, then there remained nevertheless a very agreeable kind of resource,—a marriage, that is, in which one might live one's own substantive life with the additional embellishment of some graceful, simple, gay, easy-hearted creature, who would lie light upon the surface of one's being, be at hand whenever solitude and serious pursuits had become irksome, and never be in the way when she was not wanted. Visions these are; merely dreams of our Epicurean youth. There is no such wife, and marriage is what Antonio took it to be.

And marriage being thus the highest stake on this side the grave, it seems strange that men should be so hasty in the choice of a wife as they sometimes are; for if we look about us at those marriages in which men and women have chosen for themselves, we shall find that even where there has been no absolute passion to expedite the business, the choice has not always been preceded by much deliberation. Perhaps it is owing to that very

fact of the decision being so critical, that it is often a little hurried; for when great interests are depending, we deliberate with an anxiety to avoid error which presently becomes too painful to be endured, and perhaps, also, too disturbing to be successful; and it is at some crisis of their fortunes that men in all times have been disposed to commit them to Providence, under various forms of reliance, some religious, others superstitious. We are most sensible of the fallibility of human judgment in those matters in which it is most essential to judge well, and to the irreligious man, fate, destiny, chance, sortilege, the stars —anything seems more trustworthy; whilst he who is not irreligious knows that what is done in faith will be justified in the fruits, be they sweet or bitter. The maid who "was married one morning as she went into the garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit," might have nothing to fear in marriage if she was one to whom all things work together for good.

Men who know not in what to put trust will often fall into the fatal error of supposing that

some of the graver consequences of marriage are to be escaped by concubinage,—a supposition from which, if there be no better monitor at hand, even the wisdom of this world might withhold them. Unless they be utterly heartless and worthless, they will find that the looser tie is not the lighter. Mistresses, if they have any hold on the affections, are generally more exacting than wives; and with reason, for there will naturally be the most assertion of claims where there is the least ground for confidence. The claims strengthen with time, whilst the qualities for which mistresses are commonly chosen, and on which they depend for their charm, are proverbially perishable. Beauty and the vivacities of youth fall away as soon from the concubine as if she were a wife; domestic cares and jealousies will accrue as readily in the one case as in the other; and unless generosity be out of the question, and a man have so "corrupted his compassions" as to have deliberately determined to keep a woman's affections until they should involve

the cares naturally belonging to the affections and then to cast them off, there is no one of the burthens, vexations, dues and responsibilities incident to marriage, which will not be felt with ten-fold force in concubinage. Such are the miscalculations of selfishness. A man thinks that he has hung a trinket round his neck, and behold! it is a millstone.

Whilst one man will be hurried into a marriage from the very painfulness of perplexity, another will live and die a bachelor out of mere indecision. The latter case is the more rare, and requires a peculiar serenity of temper and strength of irresolution. But it can occur. And the cases occur very frequently in which a man misses, through indecision, the opportunity of making the marriage he would have liked best, and then, resolving to be indecisive no more, takes a wrong decision. So that having regard to the various sources from which error proceeds in such matters, it may perhaps be reasonably doubted whether a passion, with all its impetuosities and illusions, affords,

comparatively speaking, an ill-guidance; and whether those who have surrendered to it might not have been as much misled had they proposed to themselves the task of making a calm and judicious choice.

And indeed the seasonable time for the exercise of prudence is not so much in choosing a wife or a husband, as in choosing with whom you will so associate as to risk the engendering of a passion. Even in this choice the prudence should not be cold-blooded; for a cold-blooded choice of associates is likely to lead to a cold-blooded marriage. With the leanings and leaps of the heart in the new acquaintanceships of the young, there should be just so much prudence presiding as will turn them away from what there is reasonable ground for believing to be false, selfish, weak or vicious. There should be thus much and no more. If the taste and fancy are resisted upon grounds less substantial than these, they are resisted by what is less worthy to prevail than they; for the taste and fancy are by no means of small

account—they are indeed of all but paramount importance—in human life and intercourse. The taste lies deep in our nature, and strikes the key-note with which outward circumstance is to harmonise.

But if the taste be in truth a matter of such import and ascendancy in our life, it follows that we are deeply responsible for the formation of it. It is, like everything else in us, partly of Nature's fashioning, partly of our own; and though it is to rest upon the foundation of our natural dispositions, it is to be built, not like a baby-house at our pleasure, but according to the laws and model of the great Architect, like a temple. If there can be little that is genial or cordial in our life, married or unmarried, unless the taste be indulged, for that very reason it behoves us so to raise and purify the taste as to be enabled to give way to it in safety and innocence—not certainly with a total abandonment or an absolute affiance—nothing short of perfection in taste could justify that—but with a trust proportioned

to the degree of purity and elevation which has been attained. According to this measure our habitual propensities will be towards what is good; whilst the habit of guarding and correcting the taste will prevail to some extent even over its more impassioned movements; and if we are carried away by our fancy, we shall yet know whither we are going, and give some guidance as well as take some.

Wealth and worldly considerations have a good deal to do with the choice made in most marriages; and though the taste which is under these influences will not be supposed to be very high, yet if it cannot be elevated, better that a man should take the lower course to which it points, than aim at what is above him. If his mind be habitually involved in worldly interests and pursuits, he has no right to suppose that by stepping aside from them on a single occasion, even though it be the most important of all occasions, he can place himself in a different order of beings, or bring himself into harmony with

what is high and free. What he has to do is to emancipate his mind if he can; but if not, to marry according to the conditions of his slavery. For if he marries from a mere impulse of his higher mind, whilst he is still in habitual subjection to the lower, the impulse will pass away, whilst the habit stands fast, and the man will find that he has introduced a discord into his life, or rather that he has composed it in the wrong key. The man who marries for money has one advantage over those who marry for other considerations; he can know what he gets; if he can feed upon husks and draff, it is competent to him to see that his trough is filled.

But if marrying *for* money is to be justified only in the case of those unhappy persons who are fit for nothing better, it does not follow that marrying *without* money is to be justified in others,—marrying, that is, without the possession or the fair prospect of a competency suited to their condition in life. What is to constitute such a

competency depends in a great measure on the prudence, independence, and strength in self-denial of the parties. Those who resolve to marry on very small means, against the wishes of their relatives and friends, should always consider that they are setting up a claim to an extraordinary share of these excellent virtues; and they should not expect their claim to be readily acknowledged unless it be founded, not merely on good intentions, but on actual savings, on ascertained facts of frugality and habits of self-sacrifice. Without such habits, they may intend and profess what they please as to independence and self-reliance: the result will be that they have indulged their unworldly inclinations at the expense of others.

Rank and station have an influence which, though not very high or worthy, is to be regarded, I think, as somewhat less bare and poor than motives which are merely mercenary. There is something in differences of rank and degree which affects the imagi-

nation, as everything does which is unfamiliar; and an imaginative person is perhaps more apt to fall in love with what is either above him or below him in station, than with what is on a dead level with him. This, however natural, should be looked upon as a misdirection of the fancy; for any extreme inequality of station will commonly lead to sore trials in marriage.

Beauty, in itself and of itself, has, I believe, less power in determining matrimonial choice than at first sight it might seem natural that it should have. The charm of mere physical and corporeal beauty is perhaps too open and immediate to involve consequences; its first effect is too strong in proportion to its further effects: for the imagination of man wishes to feel that it has something to come to; and there is a charm more insidiously winning in that which turns to beauty as you advance, than in that which declares itself as beauty from the first.

Lord Bacon has said that "there is no excellent beauty without some strangeness in

the proportion;" from which I infer that the beauty which had individuality was alone excellent in his eyes; and I believe this to be so far prevalent amongst mankind, that whilst the name of beauty is given to perfection of symmetry, the power of beauty is felt in a slight deviation from it—just sufficient to individualise without impairing. It is this peculiarity, this "some strangeness," which lays hold of the imagination.

But even when such a hold has been taken, the first feelings are those of admiration rather than love, and there must be something *in* the beauty indicating something *besides* the beauty, in order that the admiration may pass into love. If other forces are behind, admiration is an excellent herald and harbinger of love; if not, admiration will not of itself constitute love; indeed, where the passion of love has attained to its full force, admiration will sometimes be almost lost and absorbed: "She loved too deeply to admire," said one lady writing of another some thirty years ago.

It is commonly said that beauty, howsoever enchanting before marriage, becomes a matter of indifference after. But if the beauty be of that quality which not only attracts admiration, but helps to deepen it into love, I am not one of those who think that what charmed the lover is forthwith to be lost upon the husband. It is doubtless a question of kind. There may be much beauty, eminent in its way, which is but "the perfume and suppliance of a minute;" but there exists also a species and quality of beauty, the effect whereof (as I conceive) it would not be possible for daily familiarity to deaden, and the power whereof may be expected to last as long as the beauty itself lasts, and perhaps much longer. Pictures and statues wrought by the more spiritual masters of art, do not satiate the sense; and if in that beauty which is of art's creation, when the art is of the highest order, there is this cleaving and abiding power, we are not to doubt that Nature, which creates the art, is competent to create without the intervention

of the art, a beauty expressed in flesh and blood, that may be constantly lived with and daily dwelt upon, yet be found to be not less inexhaustible in its charm. Other objects will intervene, no doubt, where beauty is present to our daily life; a man cannot be consciously and continually occupied with such impressions; insusceptible *moods* will intervene also, and the perceptions will from time to time be overclouded; this will be the case in regard to works of art, and even in regard to those natural and universal sources from which the sense of beauty in man is nourished as with its daily food; nor can it be otherwise in regard to human beauty: but when this beauty is pure and spiritual, I see no reason to suppose that it will be a less permanent source than those others; and I will not consent to believe that daily familiarity with it will make it of no effect, any more than that the flowers will cease to please because they hang over our doors, or the stars because they shine nightly.

The exception to be taken to beauty as a

marriage portion, (if it be beauty of the highest order,) is not therefore that it can become otherwise than precious whilst it lasts, but rather that, as it is precious so is it perishable, and that, let it be valued as it may, it must be accounted at the best but a melancholy possession:—

> "For human beauty is a sight
> To sadden rather than delight;
> Being the prelude of a lay
> Whose burthen is decay."

And if it be our fortune to encounter in flesh and blood a beauty which seems to revive for us the realities from which Rafaello and Perugino painted, we are to consider whether to possess such beauty in marriage and see it subjected to the changes and chances of this mortal life, would not bring upon us the same sort of feeling with which we should contemplate a Madonna or a St. Cecilia hanging exposed to the weather and losing some tenth part of its form and colouring with each successive winter.

I have said that, considering the many

misguidances to which a deliberative judgment is exposed in the matter of marriage, there may often be less risk of error in a choice which is impassioned. But I ought perhaps to have explained that by a passion I do not mean—what young ladies sometimes mistake for it—a mere imaginative sentiment, dream, or illusion. Such imaginative sentiments, dreams, or illusions, not only do not constitute a passion, but they commonly render the person who indulges them incapable of conceiving one; they bring out a strong fancy perhaps, but a weak and wasted heart. This is well understood by worldly mothers, who will rather promote than discourage a rapid succession of such sentiments, resting upon the maxim that there is safety in numbers. In destitution there is security from arrest, in nakedness there is security from a rending of garments, and in this beggary of the heart there is security from a passion.

But if the heart have been trained in the way that it should go, the passion to which it will lie open will be something very different

from a warm illusion or a sentimental dream, though very possibly including these, and having begun in them. For true love is not, I think, that isolated and indivisible unity which it might be supposed to be from the way in which it is sometimes spoken of. It is mixed and manifold according to the abundance of the being, and in a large nature becomes in its progress a highly composite passion; commonly, no doubt, having its source in admiration and imaginative sentiment, but as it rolls on, involving divers tributaries, swollen by accessory passions, feelings, and affections,—pity, gratitude, generosity, loyalty, fidelity, anxiety, fear, and devotion,—and deepened by the embankments of duty and justice—foreign to the subject as these last may seem to some. In short, the whole nature and conscience being worked upon by this passion, re-act upon it and become interfused and blended with it; not by an absorption of all elements into one, but by a development of each into each: and when, therefore, I affirm that passion, err though it may, will be often less misleading

than the dispassionate judgment, I do but aver that the entire nature—reason, conscience, and affections, interpenetrating and triune,—that this totality of the nature, raised, vivified, and enlarged by love—is less likely to take an erroneous direction than a part of the nature standing aloof and dictating to the other parts.

I say not, however, that the risk is small in either case or under any guidance. Far from it. And the preference to be given to passion as a guide, will depend upon the natural capabilities, and the maturity and cultivation of the moral, spiritual, and intellectual mind. If there be much of this for the passion to call out, it will be an exalted and enlightened passion, and may see its way. If there be little, it will be a blind passion. Whence it follows that passion is not to be taken for a guide in extreme youth; in the rawness of the moral and spiritual elements, and the greenness of the judgment. And as it is in these days that a first passion will most frequently take place, it will generally

be found, I believe, that a second may be better trusted.

If, however, I maintain that passion in one season or another of our soul's progress, is to have a voice of much force and potency in the direction of the judgment, and will enlighten it on some points more than it may bedarken it on others, this is not because I imagine that it can realise its illusions or establish its empire in marriage. Passion is of course designed by Nature to be transitory, — a paroxysm,—not a state. And then the question arises which has been so often agitated, whether the affection which succeeds marriage is in all cases much influenced—and if influenced, how influenced—by the nature of the feeling which preceded? Whether a passion which has transmigrated into an affection carries with it into the affection any elements which could not exist in an affection otherwise originating? When it begins with passion, there must needs be a period of collapse and regurgitation, or at least of subsidence. Whether, therefore, is the affection the

weaker for never having known the high tide, or the stronger for not having felt the refluence? This temporary flooding of the affections, does it devastate as regards durable results, or does it enrich?

I think that the predominance, amounting almost to universality, of the law of Nature which places us once in our lives at least under the dominion of this passion, would afford of itself a strong presumption that some beneficial result is to be brought about by it. And if it be admitted (as without any offence to Calvin I hope it well may), that the better part of most human beings is the larger part, it will follow that this temporary expansion and outburst of the whole of the being, will bring a greater accession of good activities than of bad; and as the first cry of the infant is necessary to bring the lungs into play, so the first love of the adult may, through a transitory disturbance, be designed to impart a healthy action to the moral and spiritual nature. The better the tree, the better of course will be the fruits; neither

the rains of spring nor the glow of summer will make grapes grow upon brambles; but whatever the fruits may be, the yield will be larger after every seasonable operation of Nature has been undergone. With the few in whom envy, jealousy, suspicion, pride, and self-love are predominant, there may be an aggravation of these evil dispositions or of some of them; but to them (and God be praised they are the many) with whom humility, generosity, the love of God, and the love of God's creatures, though partly latent perhaps, is powerfully inherent, the passion of love will bring with it an enlargement and a deepening and strengthening of these better elements, such as no other visitation of merely natural influences, however favourably received and dutifully cherished, could avail to produce. And when the passion has past away, the enlargement of the nature will remain; and as the better and more abounding human being will make the better and more abounding husband or wife, so will the marriage which has been

preceded by a passion, be a better marriage—other things alike—than that which has not—more exalted, more genial, more affluent in affections.

If the passion have ended, not in a marriage but in a disappointment, the nature, if it have strength to bear the pressure, will be more ennobled and purified by that than by success. Of the uses of adversity which are sweet, none are sweeter than those which grow out of disappointed love; nor is there any greater mistake in contemplating the issues of life, than to suppose that baffled endeavours and disappointed hopes bear no fruits, because they do not bear those particular fruits which were sought and sighed for:—

> "The tree
> Sucks kindlier nurture from a soil enriched
> By its own fallen leaves; and man is made,
> In heart and spirit, from deciduous hopes
> And things that seem to perish."

Indeed the power and spiritual efficacy of love can hardly be realised to its full extent without either disappointment, or at least

reverses, vicissitudes, and doubts; and of the fact which Shakspeare observes, that

"The course of true love never did run smooth,"

perhaps this explanation may be given,—that roughnesses are needful in order to make the love true; and marriages that follow upon trouble, trial, and vicissitude, will be more likely to be conservative of the love by which they have been achieved, than those which are merely the crown or coronal of a triumphal career in courtship:

"The flowers in sunshine gathered soonest fade."

Amongst the obstructions which the course of love has commonly to encounter, one which is specified by Shakspeare is the opposition of parents; and it is often one of the most perplexing problems in human life to determine to what length parental opposition should proceed in such cases. A moderate opposition can seldom do harm, unless there be positive perversity in the parties opposed, so that opposition shall be in itself a provocative to folly. Such perversity apart, a moderate

opposition will suffice to set aside a weak love, whilst it will tend to consolidate a strong one; and it will thus act favourably in either case, so far as regards that most essential element in all such matters,—the weakness or strength of the affection. In respect of an opposition beyond this, it seems hardly possible to generalise, the qualities of the persons and the specialties of the cases being so all-important. In *extreme* youth, obedience should be the rule of the child. But so soon as the child shall have attained to a fair maturity of judgment, there is a moral responsibility for the just exercise of that judgment which must not be overlaid by an exaggerated notion of filial duty. Of the members of a family it is for the benefit of all that each should act upon each with some degree, though with very different degrees, of controlling influence. The sons and daughters, when children no longer, are to demean themselves towards the parents with humility, deference, and a desire to conform, but not with an absolute subjection of the judgment

and the will. On the question of choice in marriage, as on other questions on which both child and parent are personally concerned, if the child presumptuously conceive that his judgment is mature when it is not mature, or that it is worthy to be weighed with his parents' when it is not worthy, he is culpable of course, being chargeable, not with mere error of judgment, but with the sin of presumption. On the other hand, if in all humility of heart and desire to be dutiful, he shall nevertheless clearly perceive, or think he perceives, that his judgment is the juster and is guided by higher, purer, and more righteous views of life, it behoves him, after much patience and the neglect of no endeavour to bring about a coincidence of judgment, to resist his parents' judgment and give effect to that which he conceives to be better; and this for his parents' sake as well as for his own. We all need resistance to our errors on every side. "Woe unto us when all men shall speak well of us!" and woe unto us also, when all men shall give way to us!

It may be a sacred duty on the part of a child to give a helpful resistance to a parent, when the parent is the more erring of the two; and the want of such resistance, especially on the part of daughters, (for they are more prone than sons to misconceive their duties of this kind, or to fail in firmness), has often betrayed a parent into fatal errors, followed by life-long remorse. Women, in a state of exaltation from excited feelings, imagining because duty often requires self-sacrifice, that when they are sacrificing themselves they must needs be doing their duty, will often be capable of taking a resolution, when they are not capable of undergoing the consequences with fortitude. For it is one sort of strength that is required for an act of heroism; another, and a much rarer sort, which is available for a life of endurance. Probably most people could quote instances within their own knowledge, in which the daughter has obeyed, and then losing her health, and with it perhaps her temper and her resignation, has died of what is called a

broken heart; thus, as it were, heaping coals of fire upon the parents' head.

But if an unreasonable opposition to a daughter's choice be not to prevail, I think that, on the other hand, the parents, if their views of marriage be pure from worldliness, are justified in using a good deal of management—not more than they very often do use, but more than they are wont to avow or than society is wont to countenance,—with a view to putting their daughters in the way of such marriages as they can approve. It is the way of the world to give such management an ill name,—probably because it is most used by those who abuse it to worldly purposes; and I have heard a mother pique herself on never having taken a single step to get her daughters married,—which appeared to me to have been a dereliction of one of the most essential duties of a parent. If the mother be wholly passive, either the daughters must take steps and use management for themselves (which is not desirable), or the happiness and the most important interests

of their lives, moral and spiritual, must be the sport of chance and take a course purely fortuitous; and in many situations, where unsought opportunities of choice do not abound, the result may be not improbably such a love and marriage as the mother and every one else contemplates with astonishment. Some such astonishment I recollect to have expressed on an occasion of the kind to an illustrious poet and philosopher, whose reply I have always borne in mind when other such cases have come under my observation:—"We have no reason to be surprised, unless we knew what may have been the young lady's opportunities. If Miranda had not fallen in with Ferdinand, she would have been in love with Caliban."

It may be observed, I think, that women of high intellectual endowments and much dignity of deportment, have the greatest difficulty in marrying, and stand most in need of a mother's help. And this, not because they are themselves fastidious (for they are often as little so as any), but because

men are not humble enough to wish to have their superiors for their wives.

Great wealth in a woman tends to keep at a distance both the proud and the humble, leaving the unhappy live-bait to be snapped at by the hardy and the greedy. If the wealthy father of an only daughter could be gifted with a knowledge of what parental care and kindness really is, it is my assured belief that he would disinherit her. If he leaves her his wealth, the best thing for her to do is to marry the most respectable individual she can find of the class of men who marry for money. An heiress remaining unmarried is a prey to all manner of extortion and imposition, and with the best intentions becomes, through ill-administered expenditure and misdirected bounty, a corruption to her neighbourhood and a curse to the poor; or if experience shall put her on her guard, she will lead a life of resistance and suspicion, to the injury of her own mind and nature.

In the case, therefore, of either high endowments or great wealth in a daughter, the

care of a parent is peculiarly needed to multiply her opportunities of making a good choice in marriage; and in no case can such care be properly pretermitted.

When the mother takes no pains, the marriage of the daughter, even if not in itself ineligible, is likely to be unduly deferred. For the age at which marriages are to be contracted is a very material consideration. Aristotle was of opinion that the bridegroom should be thirty-seven years of age and the bride eighteen; alleging physical reasons which I venture to think exceedingly inconclusive. Eighteen for the bride is the least to be objected to, and would yet be rather early in this climate. A girl of that age may be not absolutely unprepared for marriage; but she has hardly had time for that longing and yearning affection which is to be her best security after. Sir Thomas More, in accounting for Jane Shore's infidelity to her husband, observes, that "forasmuche as they wer coupled ere she wer wel ripe, she not very fervently loved for whom she never

longed." But whether or not the girl be to be considered ripe at eighteen, I know no good reason, moral or physical, why the man should withhold himself till seven-and-thirty, and many excellent reasons against it. Some few years of seniority on the part of the man, I do conceive to be desirable; and on this, as well as on other grounds, the woman should marry young; for if the woman were to be past her first youth and the man to be some years older, it follows that the man would remain longer unmarried than it is good for him to be alone. On the point of seniority, let us listen to the Duke and Viola—

*Duke.* " . . . . . Let still the woman take
An older than herself; so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband's heart.
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn
Than women's are.

*Viola.* I think it well, my Lord.

*Duke.* Then let thy love be younger than thyself,
Or thy affection cannot hold the bent:
For women are as roses; whose fair flower
Being once displayed, doth fall that very hour."*

* " Twelfth Night," Act ii. Sc. 4.

The woman should marry, therefore, rather before than after that culminating period of personal charm, which, varying much in different individuals, is but a short period in any, and occurs in early youth in almost all. She should marry between twenty and thirty years of age, but nearer the former than the latter period. Now the man at such an age would probably be too light in himself for married life, especially for the man's part in it; and the more so when marrying a wife equally young. For when two very young people are joined together in matrimony, it is as if one sweet-pea should be put as a prop to another. The man, therefore, may be considered most marriageable when he is nearer thirty than twenty, or perhaps when he is a a little beyond thirty. If his marriage be deferred much longer, there is some danger of his becoming hardened in celibacy. In the case of a serious and thoughtful man, it need not be deferred so long; for in such a case, a remark made in a letter of Lord Bacon's will probably be verified—that a man finds himself seven years older the day after his marriage.

In these times men are disposed, I think, to be rather too tardy than too precipitate in marrying. Worldly prudence is strong in us now, even to a vice; and a competency, or what is estimated to be a competency, is not attainable at a very early age. A circle of friends and relatives commonly resent, as an injury to themselves, a poor marriage contracted at an early age; and not without reason, if the virtues of the parties contracting it are not such as to justify it. But that will be prudence in a prudent man which is imprudence in another; and one thing is certain, that the prudence which postpones marriage is excessive to a vice when it involves other vices, and presents temptations less likely to be resisted than those to which a poor marriage lies open.

There are other motives and circumstances besides those connected with prudence, which, in the case of men, militate against early marriages. If their first passion (as it happens with most first passions) have issued in a disappointment, and if they have passed

through their disappointment without being betrayed, by the heart's abhorrence of its vacuum, into some immediate marriage of the *pis-aller* kind, resorted to for mere purposes of repose, they will probably find that a first seizure of the kind guarantees them for a certain number of years against a second. In the meantime, the many interests, aspirations, and alacrities of youth, its keen pursuits and its fresh friendships, fill up the measure of life, and make the single heart sufficient to itself. It is when these things have partly passed away, and life has lost something of its original brightness, that men begin to feel an insufficiency and a want. I have known it to be remarked by a Roman Catholic priest, as the result of much observation of life amongst his brethren, that the pressure of their vow of celibacy was felt most severely towards forty years of age.

If a man have fairly passed that period without marrying or attempting marriage, then, I think, or very soon after, he may conclude that there is no better fortune in store

for him, and dispose himself finally for the life celibate.

"Till age, refrain not; but if old, refrain,"

says one of the shrewdest of the unpoetical poets.* And this abstinence from marriage on the part of old men, is to be enjoined, not only on their own account, but on account of the offspring to which such marriages may give birth. The sort of age in youth and the weakness of constitution which is observable in the offspring of old men, involves national as well as individual evil, because it tends to degeneracy of the race; and amongst the Romans, who were careful of their breed, there was a law, the *Lex Pappia*, which forbade the marriage of a man of more than sixty years of age with a woman of less than fifty. If the old man have male issue, there will generally be further the evils to the son of an ill-tended minority and a premature independence.

The marriages of old men to young women

* Crabbe.

are, for the most part, as objectionable in their motives as in their results; and the mistake of such marriages is generally as great as the moral misfeasance. There is no greater error of age than to suppose that it can recover the enjoyment of youth by possessing itself of what youth only can enjoy; and age will never appear so unlovely as when it is seen with such an ill-sorted accompaniment—

> "A chaplet of forced flowers on Winter's brow
> Seems not less inharmonious to me,
> Than the untimely snow on the green leaf."

For the young women who make such marriages there is sometimes more to be said than for the old men. When the motives are mercenary there is nothing to be said for them; and but little when the case is one of weak consent to the mercenary baseness of parents, or when they sacrifice themselves (as they will sometimes allege) in a rich alliance for the relief of a large family of destitute brothers and sisters. These are but beggarly considerations, and might be

equally pled in defence of a less disguised prostitution. But a case will sometimes occur in which a young woman is dazzled by great achievements or renown; and what is heroical or illustrious may inspire a feeling which, distinct though it be from that which youth inspires in youth, is yet not unimaginative, and may suffice to sanctify the marriage vow. And there is another case, not certainly to be altogether vindicated and yet not to be visited with much harshness of censure, in which a woman who has had her heart broken, seeks, in this sort of marriage, such an asylum as, had she been a Roman Catholic, she might have found in a convent.

Marriages of the old with the old are rare, and are thought by some people to be ridiculous. They do not, however, fall within the purview of the *Lex Pappia*, or of any other prohibition that I am acquainted with, and I hardly know why they should be so unfrequent as they are. Solitude is ill suited to old age, and the course of circumstances tends too often to leave the old in solitude.

Cases must be continually occurring in which it would be for the comfort and happiness of old friends of different sexes to live together; and if they cannot do so conveniently or creditably without being married, I know not why they should be laughed at for marrying. It must be, no doubt, a totally different connection from that which is formed in earlier life; and it is one which might be, perhaps, more fitly ratified by a civil contract than by a religious ceremony; but the lawful rights of a wife are necessary to the female friend, in order that she may be regarded with due respect by her husband's relatives and by the world, and in order that she may have authority in her household: and if the marriage be ascribed to this reasonable motive, instead of supposing any which would be unreasonable and ridiculous, it may be regarded, I think, as a wise and commendable species of arrangement.

## OF WISDOM.

WISDOM is not the same with understanding, talents, capacity, ability, sagacity, sense, or prudence—not the same with any one of these; neither will all these together make it up. It is that exercise of the reason into which the heart enters—a structure of the understanding rising out of the moral and spiritual nature.

It is for this cause that a high order of wisdom—that is, a highly intellectual wisdom—is still more rare than a high order of genius. When they reach the very highest order they are one; for each includes the other, and intellectual greatness is matched with moral strength. But they hardly ever reach so high, inasmuch as great intellect, according to the ways of Providence, almost always brings along with it

great infirmities—or, at least, infirmities which appear great owing to the scale of operation; and it is certainly exposed to unusual temptations; for as power and pre-eminence lie before it, so ambition attends it, which, whilst it determines the will and strengthens the activities, inevitably weakens the moral fabric.

Wisdom is corrupted by ambition, even when the quality of the ambition is intellectual. For ambition, even of this quality, is but a form of self-love, which, seeking gratification in the consciousness of intellectual power, is too much delighted with the exercise to have a single and paramount regard to the end; and it is not according to wisdom that the end—that is, the moral and spiritual consequences—should suffer derogation in favour of the intellectual means. God is love, and God is light; whence it results that love is light; and it is only by following the effluence of that light, that intellectual power issues into wisdom. The intellectual power which loses that light

and issues into intellectual pride, is out of the way to wisdom, and will not attain even to intellectual greatness. For though many arts, gifts, and attainments may co-exist in much force with intellectual pride, an open greatness cannot; and of all the correspondencies between the moral and intellectual nature, there is none more direct and immediate than that of humility with capaciousness. If pride of intellect be indulged, it will mark out to a man conscious of great talents the circle of his own intellectual experiences as the only one in which he can keenly recognise and appreciate the intellectual universe; and there is no order of intellectual men which stands in a more strict limitation than that of the man who cannot conceive what he does not contain. Such men will oftentimes dazzle the world, and exercise in their day and generation much influence on the many whose range is no wider than theirs and whose force is less; but the want of spiritual and imaginative wisdom will stop them there; and the understandings from

which mankind will seek a permanent and authentic guidance, will be those which have been exalted by love and enlarged by humility.

If wisdom be defeated by ambition and self-love, when these are occupied with the mere inward consciousness of intellectual power, still more is it so when they are eager to obtain recognition and admiration of it from without. Men who are accustomed to write or speak for effect, may write or speak what is wise from time to time, because they may be capable of thinking and intellectually adopting what is wise: but they will not be wise men; because the love of God, the love of man, and the love of truth not having the mastery with them, the growth and structure of their minds must needs be perverted if not stunted. Thence it is that so many men are observed to speak wisely and yet act foolishly; they are not deficient in their understandings, but the wisdom of the heart is wanting to their ends and objects, and to those feelings which have the direction

of their acts. And if they do speak wisely, it is not because they are wise; for the permanent shape and organisation of the mind proceeds from what we feel and do, and not from what we speak, write, or think. There is a great volume of truth in the admonition which teaches us that the spirit of obedience is to prepare the way, action to come next, and that knowledge is not precedent to these, but consequent: "Do the will of my Father which is in heaven, and thou shalt know of the doctrine."

Those who are much conversant with intellectual men will observe, I think, that the particular action of self-love by which their minds are most frequently warped from wisdom, is that which belongs to a pride and pleasure taken in the exercise of the argumentative faculty; whence it arises, that that faculty is enabled to assert a predominance over its betters. With such men, the elements of a question which will make effect in argument,—those which are, so far as they go, demonstrative,—will be rated

above their value; and those which are matter of proportion and degree, not palpable, ponderable, or easily or shortly producible in words, or which are matters of moral estimation and optional opinion, will go for less than they are worth, because they are not available to ensure the victory or grace the triumph of a disputant.

In some discussions, a wise man will be silenced by argumentation, only because he knows that the question should be determined by considerations which lie beyond the reach of argumentative exhibition. And indeed, in all but purely scientific questions, arguments are not to be submitted to by the judgment as first in command; rather they are to be used as auxiliaries and pioneers; the judgment should profit by them to the extent of the services they can render, but after their work is done, it should come to its conclusions upon its own free survey. I have seldom known a man with great powers of argumentation abundantly indulged, who could attain to an habitually

just judgment. In our courts of law, where advocacy and debate are most in use, ability, sagacity, and intellectual power flourish and abound, whilst wisdom is said to have been disbarred. In our houses of parliament the case is somewhat otherwise; the silent members, and those who take but little part in debate, and indeed the country at large which may be said to listen, exercise some subduing influence over the spirit of argumentation, and the responsibility for results restrains it, so that here its predominance is much less than in the courts of law; yet even in the houses of parliament wisdom has been supposed to have less to say to the proceedings than a certain species of courage.

Ambition and self-love will commonly derange that proportion between the active and passive understanding which is essential to wisdom, and will lead a man to value thoughts and opinions less according to their worth and truth, than according as they are his own or another's. The objection made

by Brutus to Cicero in the play,—that he "would never follow anything which other men began"—points to one corruption operated by self-love upon a great understanding. Some preference a man may reasonably accord to what is the growth of his own mind apart from its absolute value, on the ground of its specific usefulness to himself; for what is native to the soil will thrive better and bear more fruit than what has been transplanted: but, on the other hand, if a man would enlarge the scope and diversify the kinds of his thoughts and contemplations, he should not think too much to apprehend nor talk too much to listen. He should cherish the thoughts of his own begetting with a loving care and a temperate discipline—they are the *family* of his mind and its chief reliance—but he should give a hospitable reception to guests and to travellers with stories of far countries, and the family should not be suffered to crowd the doors.

Even without the stimulant of self-love, some minds, owing to a natural redundance

of activity and excess of velocity and fertility, cannot be sufficiently passive to be wise. A capability to take a thousand views of a subject is hard to be reconciled with directness and singleness of judgment; and he who can find a great deal to say for any view, will not often go the straight road to the one view that is right. If subtlety be added to exuberance, the judgment is still more endangered—

"Tell Wit how oft she wrangles
In tickel points of niceness,
Tell Wisdom she entangles
Herself in over-wiseness." *

But when self-love is not at the root, there is better hope for wisdom. Nature presents us with various walks of intellectual life, and such a selection may be made as shall render a disproportion of the active to the passive intellect less dangerous. Speculative wisdom will suffer less by excess of thinking than practical wisdom. There are fields to be fought in which a wide range is more essen-

* Sir Walter Raleigh.

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tial than an unerring aim. In some regions we are to cultivate the surface; in others to sink the shaft. No one intellect can be equally available for opposite avocations, and where there is no interference of self-love, wisdom will be attained through a wise choice of work. One eminent man of our times has said of another, that "science was his forte and omniscience his foible." But that instance was not an extreme one. Cases have occurred in which wisdom has suffered total overthrow; the greatest intellect and the greatest folly have been known to meet; and the universalist, who handles everything and embraces nothing, has been seen to pass into a pursuer of the mere vanities and frivolities of intellectual display.

If, however, a man of genius be fortunately free from ambition, there is yet another enemy which will commonly lie in wait for his wisdom; to wit, a great capacity of enjoyment. This generally accompanies genius, and is, perhaps, the greatest of all trials to the

moral and spiritual heart. It was a trial too severe even for Solomon,

> "whose heart, though large,
> Beguiled by fair Idolatresses fell
> To idols foul." *

The temptation by which such a man is assailed consists in imagining that he has within himself and by virtue of his temperament, sources of joy altogether independent of conduct and circumstances. It is true that he has these sources on this unconditional tenure for a time; and it is owing to this very truth that his futurity is in danger,—not in respect of wisdom only, but also in respect of happiness. And if we look to recorded examples, we shall find that a great capacity of enjoyment does ordinarily bring about the destruction of enjoyment in its own ulterior consequences, having uprooted wisdom by the way.

A man of genius, so gifted—or, let us rather say, so tempted—lives until the consummation approaches, as if he possessed some elixir

* Paradise Lost.

or phylactery, reckless of consequences because his happiness, being so inward to his nature, seems to be inherent and indefeasible. Wisdom is not wanted. The intellect, perhaps, amidst the abundance of its joys, rejoices in wise contemplations; but wisdom is not adopted and domesticated in the mind, owing to the fearlessness of the heart. For wisdom will have no hold on the heart in which joy is not tempered by fear. The fear of the Lord, we know, is the beginning of it; and some hallowing and chastening influences of fear will always go along with it. Fear, indeed, is the mother of foresight; spiritual fear, of a foresight that reaches beyond the grave; temporal fear, of a foresight that falls short; but without fear there is neither the one foresight nor the other; and as pain has been truly said to be the deepest thing in our nature, so is it fear that will bring the depths of our nature within our knowledge:—

"What sees rejoicing genius in the Earth?
A thousand meadows with a thousand herds
Freshly luxuriant in a Mayday dawn;

A thousand ships that caracole and prance
With freights of gold upon a sunny sea;
A thousand gardens gladdened by all flowers,
That on the air breathe out an odorous beauty.

Genius may see all this and rejoice; but it will not exalt itself into wisdom, unless it see also the meadow in the livid hues of winter, the ship under bare poles, and the flower when the beauty of the fashion of it perishes.

It is true, however, that the cases are rare and exceptional in which this dangerous capacity of enjoyment is an unbroken habit, so as to bring a steady and continuous pressure upon the moral mind. A great capacity of *suffering* belongs to genius also; and it has been observed that an alternation of joyfulness and dejection is quite as characteristic of the man of genius as intensity in either kind. Doubtless these alternations will greatly enlarge his knowledge both of Man and of the universe. The many moods of his own mind will give him a penetrating and experienced insight into many minds; and he will contemplate the universe and all that

goes on in it from many points of view. Moreover, it is by re-action from the extreme of one state, that the mind receives the most powerful impulse towards another—in resilience, that it has its plenary force. But, though these alternations of excess do thus enlarge and enrich the understanding, and minister to wisdom so far forth, they must yet, by the shocks which they occasion to the moral will, do injury on the whole to that composite edifice, built up of the moral and rational mind, in which Wisdom has her dwelling. The injury is not so great as in the other case: better are winter and summer for the mind than the torrid zone—feasts and fasts than a perpetual plenty—but either way the temperament of genius is hardly ever favourable to wisdom; that is, the highest order of genius, or that which includes wisdom, is of all things the most rare.

On the other hand, wisdom without genius (a far more precious gift than genius without wisdom) is, by God's blessing upon the humble and loving heart, though not as often

met with as "the ordinary of Nature's sale-work," yet not altogether rare; for the desire to be right will go a great way towards wisdom. Intellectual guidance is the less needed where there is little to lead astray —where humility lets the heart loose to the impulses of love. That we can be wise by impulse will seem a paradox to some; but it is a part of that true doctrine which traces wisdom to the moral as well as the intellectual mind, and more surely to the former than to the latter—one of those truths which is recognised when we look into our nature through the clearness of a poetic spirit:—

"Moments there are in life—alas, how few!—
When casting cold prudential doubts aside,
We take a generous impulse for our guide,
And following promptly what the heart thinks best,
Commit to Providence the rest;
Sure that no after-reckoning will arise
Of shame or sorrow, for the heart is wise.
And happy they who thus in faith obey
Their better nature: err sometimes they may,
And some sad thoughts lie heavy in the breast,
Such as by hope deceived are left behind;

But like a shadow these will pass away
From the pure sunshine of the peaceful mind."*

The doctrine of wisdom by impulse is no doubt liable to be much misused and misapplied. The right to rest upon such a creed accrues only to those who have so trained their nature as to be entitled to trust it. It is the impulse of the *habitual* heart which the judgment may fairly follow upon occasion—of the heart which, being habitually humble and loving, has been framed by love to wisdom. Some such fashioning love will always effect; for love cannot exist without solicitude, solicitude brings thoughtfulness, and it is in a thoughtful love that the wisdom of the heart consists. The impulse of such a heart will take its shape and guidance from the very mould in which it is cast, without any application of the reason express; and the most inadvertent motion of a wise heart will for the most part be wisely directed; providentially, let us rather say; for Provi-

* Southey's *Oliver Newman.*

dence has no more eminent seat than in the wisdom of the heart.

Wisdom by impulse, then, is to be trusted in by those only who have habitually used their reason to the full extent of its powers in forming the heart and cultivating the judgment, whilst, owing to its constitutional deficiency, or to its peculiarity (for the reason may be unserviceable from other causes than deficiency), they are conscious that their judgment is likely to be rather perplexed than cleared by much thinking on questions on which they are called upon to act or decide. Those in whom the meditative faculty is peculiarly strong, will often find themselves in this predicament; witness Christopher Hervie's complaint:—

> "One while I think; and then I am in pain
> To think how to unthink that thought again." *

And they whose deliberative judgment is weak and indecisive from a natural debility of the reason, may act from impulse, and even though the consequences be evil, may be held

* The Synagogue, 41.

to be wise according to their kind. For the course they took may have been the wisest for *them*, being founded upon a just measurement of the insufficiencies of their understanding. And those who can take this just measurement, and holding their opinions with due diffidence, yet act in love and faith and without fear, may be wise of heart, though erring in judgment; and though not gifted with intellectual wisdom, may yet be deemed to have as much understanding as innocence has occasion for.

Upon this, however, the question will arise, whether errors of the judgment are, as such, absolutely void of offence; and whether he who has committed them may look back upon them, whatever may have been their consequences, without any compunctious visitings. An eminent statesman is said to have averred, that when he was conscious of having taken a decision with all due care and consideration, to the best of his judgment and with the best intentions, he never looked back to it with a moment's regret,

though the result might prove it to have been wholly erroneous. This is a frame of mind highly conducive to civil courage, and therefore not without its advantages in political life. But it is not equally conducive to wisdom. Nor, perhaps, in this unqualified form, is it to be altogether vindicated in morals. At all events, so much regret might be felt, if no more, as would suffice to awaken some self-questionings, not merely as to the specific moral rectitude accompanying or proximately preceding the particular act, but as to that general and life-long training of the heart to wisdom, which gives the best assurance of specific results, and of which, therefore, specific failures should suggest the deficiency. Some short-comings of this kind there must of course be in all human beings; and they should be at all times aware of it; but it is in the order of Nature that this consciousness should be quickened from time to time by the contemplation of evil consequences arising from specific errors of judgment, however innocent in themselves; which

contemplation, accompanied with a natural regret, constitutes what may be called a repentance of the understanding—not easily to be escaped by a plain man, nor properly to be repudiated by a philosopher.

Yet when the consequences of an error of judgment are irremediable, how often are those who would animadvert upon it, met with the admonition to "let the past be past:" as if the past had no relations with the future; and as if the experience of our errors of judgment, and the inquisition into their sources, did not, by its very painfulness, effect the deepest cultivation of the understanding,—that cultivation whereby what is irremediable is itself converted into a remedy.

The main scope and design of this disquisition having been to inculcate that wisdom is still more essentially a moral and spiritual than it is an intellectual attribute, that genius can mount to wisdom only by Jacob's ladder, and that knowledge can only be converted into wisdom by an application of the heart,—

I cannot better close it than with that declaration of the nature of wisdom which is delivered in the 28th chapter of the book of Job:—

"Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?

"Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.

"Destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears.

"God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.

"For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole Heaven;

"To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure.

"When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder:

"Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out.

"And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

# CHILDREN.

From the complaints which everybody brings against everybody in the matter of the management of children, one might be led to suppose that such a thing as good management of them did not exist amongst mankind. And no doubt this is so far true, that on a subject on which so many and such various kinds of errors may be committed, the best management can be but very imperfect, and those who are complained of should be willing to listen, in the assurance that real errors there are, and for the chance of those being the errors that are hit upon and pointed out.

But remonstrance and admonition, whether listened to or not, seem in general to be of as little avail on these questions as theories and

doctrines; and from the uselessness of all these, and from the fact that thoughtful and cultivated people are seen, not unfrequently, to get as wrong as others, it may be inferred that the most essential qualifications for training a child well, are not of a nature to be communicated by books or lectures on education. They are, 1st, The desire to be right in the matter; 2nd, Sense; 3rd, Kindness; and 4th, Firmness.

Where these are wanting, the wisest admonitions in the world will be of no other use than to relieve the mind of the person who throws them away.

Theories, however, seem to have more power to pervert the natural understanding, in this case, than they have to enlighten it. The doctrine of an eminent writer (of a generation now nearly gone), that a child should be reasoned into obedience, had, in its day, more of a misleading efficacy than might have been thought possible; and many a parent was induced to believe that a child should be taught to give its obedience, not

because it *was* obedience, but because the thing ordered was reasonable; the little casuists and controversialists being expected to see the reason of things as readily in real life, as in the dialogues between Tutor and Charles. The common sense of mankind has now made an end of this doctrine, and it is known now, as it was before the transit of that eminent person, that obedience—prompt, implicit, unreasoning, and almost unconscious—is the first thing to be taught to a child, and that he can have no peace for his soul without it.

The notion of setting up the reason to be the pivot of humanity, from the cradle forwards, belongs to a generation of fallacies which have returned to the dust from which they came; but it included one error in theories of education which will be found to belong to many that are still extant: the error of assuming that the parent is to be perfect. Under the reasoning regimen, what was to happen when the parent's reasons were bad? And in like manner, with re-

spect to many less unnatural systems which are recommended as if they were of universal applicability, the question may be asked, Will most parents be competent to give effect to them? And, bearing in mind the not inconsiderable number of mankind who labour under imperfections of the understanding or other disqualifying defects, I believe we shall find that a few strong instincts and a few plain rules, are all that can be appealed to for general guidance in the management of children.

That first and foremost rule of exacting obedience, is so far from being subject to the condition of showing reasons, that I believe a parent with a strong will, although it be a perverse one, will train a child better than a parent of a reasonable mind, tainted by infirmity of purpose. For as "obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," so an authority which is absolute by virtue of its own inherent strength, is better than one which is shaken by a reference to ends and purposes, and by reasonable doubts

as to whether they are the best and most useful. Nor will the parents' perversity, unless it be unkind or ill-tempered, occasion the child half so much uneasiness in the one case, as the child will suffer from those perversities of its own which will spring up in the other? For habits of instant and mechanical obedience are those that give rest to the child, and spare its health and temper; whilst a recusant or dawdling obedience will keep it distracted in propensity, bringing a perpetual pressure on its nerves and consequently on its mental and bodily strength.

To enforce this kind of obedience our most efficacious instrument is a clear and determinate manner; because with children at least this is the most significant expression of an authoritative will. But it is an instrument which those only can employ who are authoritative by temperament; for an assumed manner, or one which is not true to the temperament, will be of no avail. Those parents who are not gifted with this temperament and this manner, must needs, if they

do their duty, have recourse to punishments; of which, in the case of most children, those are best which are sharp and soon over. And let not the parents think that by a just and necessary amount of punishment they run any risk of impairing the child's affections. The risk is far greater of impairing them by indulgence. A spoilt child never loves its mother; never at least with the same measure of love as if it were unspoilt. And there is in human nature an essential though somewhat mysterious connection of love with fear, which, though chiefly recognised in the relations between man and God, is also discernible in the relations between man and man, and especially in those between parent and child.

Love in either relation is deepened by some degree — not oppressive or too disturbing — some slight degree of fear; and the very truth of the text, that "perfect love casteth out fear," shows that fear must be there before the love is made perfect. Therefore the parent who shrinks from inflicting just and

proper punishments upon a child, deprives that child not only of the rest to be found in duty and obedience, but also of the blessings of a deeper love.

There is another way not much adverted to by blind parents, in which children are injured by undue indulgence. It prevents them from benefiting by the general tendency of mankind to have kind and friendly feelings towards children. Such feelings are checked and abated when it is seen that children are unduly favoured by their parents. And when the rights and comforts of others are sacrificed for their sake, instead of being objects for the protection and good offices of all around them, they become odious in the same manner as princes' favourites do, and their parents' sins are visited upon them.

Then the repugnance which people feel towards the objects of an unjust partiality, provokes them to exaggerate the demerits of the children,—not probably to the face of the parents, but in a way to go round to them,—whereupon the parents come in with some

show of reason as protectors of injured innocence, and fortify themselves in their own delusions by detecting injustice in the views of others. It is not the nature of mankind to be unjust to children, and where parents find this injustice to prevail, they should look for the source of it in their children or in themselves.

Indeed, it is the nature of mankind to be only too kind to children, and to take too much notice of them; and this is a reason for not throwing them too much in the way of strangers and casual visitors. When the visitors are intelligent, and the parents are not the sort of people to whom flattery is acceptable, the children may be no worse for meeting the visitors, though they should never be sent for to be *shown*. But when the parents are known to have open ears for the praises of their children, there are hardly any strangers so careful and conscientious as not to say what is expected of them, and very many will carry their blandishments to

an extreme of grossness and falseness. A considerate visitor will observe the conduct of a judicious parent towards a child, and be guided by it; but the instances are far more frequent in which the folly of injudicious parents is unscrupulously abetted by the levity of others; and the only consolation for a rational bystander is that the children may have more sense than their flatterers and more discernment than their parents, and be unflattered and ill-pleased (as will sometimes happen) by these coarse attempts at adulation. In these remarks I refer of course to children, not babies. As long as children are young enough to be in the nurse's arms, they are a fair mark for all manner of flatteries, which, if they mean nothing, are to be excused in as much as they do nothing. There is an old proverb which says that "many a child is kissed for the nurse's sake;" and if it be in the nurse's arms there is no harm done.

It is selfishness on the part of parents which gives rise to undue indulgence of

children,—the selfishness of sacrificing those for whom they care less to those for whom they care more; and the selfishness of the parent for the child will invariably produce selfishness of the child for himself. A spoilt child is never generous. And selfishness is induced in a child not only by too much indulgence, but even by too much attention. It will be most for a child's happiness and well-being, both present and to come, that he should feel himself, in respect to comforts and enjoyments, the most insignificant person in the house. In that case he will have his own resources, which will be more available to him than any which perpetual attention can minister; he will be subject to fewer discontents; and his affections will be more cultivated by the occasional tokens of kindness which a contented child will naturally receive in sufficient abundance, than they would be by continual endeavours to make him happy.

And if continual attention to making him happy will not produce happiness, neither

will continual attention to making him good produce goodness. For if the child feels that there is some one incessantly occupied with his happiness and goodness, he will come to be incessantly occupied with himself. Something must be left in a spirit of faith and hope to Nature and God's providence. Parents are the instruments, but they are not to be all in all. Room must be left for some liberty of action, for many an untended impulse, for self-reliance, for temptations and trials, with their natural results of victory with self-respect, or defeat with remorse. By such treatment the child's moral nature, being amply exercised, will be seasonably strengthened; and when he comes into the world as a man, he will come with a man's weapons of defence; whereas if the child be constantly watched and kept out of harm's way, he will come into the world a moral weakling. I was once present when an old mother, who had brought up a large family of children with eminent success, was asked by a young one what she would recommend in

the case of some children who were too anxiously educated, and her reply was—"I think, my dear, a little wholesome neglect."

For similar reasons it may be well that children should not be hedged in with any great number of rules and regulations. Such as are necessary to be established, they should be required implicitly to observe. But there should be none that are superfluous. It is only in rich families, where there is a plentiful attendance of governesses and nurses, that many rules can be enforced; and I believe that the constant attentions of governesses and nurses is one of the greatest moral disadvantages to which the children of the rich are exposed.

I have heard a multiplicity of petty regulations defended, on the ground that it was a constant exercise of the child's sense of right and wrong. But will a child be really the better for always thinking about whether he does right or wrong, that is, always thinking about himself? Were it not well that, for hours together, no question of right or wrong

should arise in his path? or, at least, none that demands from him more than a half-mechanical attention? For the conscience of a child may easily be worn out, both by too much pressure, and by over-stimulation. I have known a child to have a conscience of such extraordinary and premature sensibility, that at seven years of age she would be made ill by remorse for a small fault. She was brought up by persons of excellent understanding, with infinite care and affection, and yet, by the time she was twenty years of age, she had next to no conscience and a hard heart. A person who had some experience of precocious consciences once observed to me, in respect to those children who are said to be too good and too clever to live, that it was very desirable they should not.

These views are not, of course, to be pushed too far. A child's conscience should always have that sufficiency of exercise which due discipline and the occasions of life will not fail to supply, without factitious duties or needless rules. And with respect

to the treatment of the conscience on the point of sensibility, natural constitutions are so diverse that it is difficult to speak generally; but though I would not have it much stimulated, or unintermittingly worked upon —though I would avoid to intimidate or intenerate the conscience—I do not agree with those who think that the appeals to it should be invariably made with a judicial calmness, and that all punishments should be inflicted dispassionately. Moral disapprobation on the part of parents towards children (as indeed on the part of men towards men throughout all relations of life) should not operate mechanically, bringing with it, like a calculating machine, a proportionate evil to be suffered as a consequence of every evil act. It should operate according to its own human nature, as a matter of emotion, not only bringing an evil to be suffered, but a moral sentiment to be recognised and taken to heart—a passion which should strike upon the moral sense.

According to the nature of the child and

of the fault, the emotion should be sometimes more of sorrow than of anger, sometimes more of anger than of sorrow. But it were better for the child's conscience that there should be some errors of emotion, than that punishments should be cold and dry. A parent should "be angry and sin not;" that is, the anger should be a just and moral anger, and grave and governed; but at the same time it should be the real anger of flesh and blood, and not the mere *vis motrix* of an instrument of discipline. In this way the moral sentiments of the parent, if they be virtuous, generous and just, will be imparted to the child: for it is a truth never to be lost sight of in the treatment of our children, that their characters are formed, not by what we do, think, or teach, but by what we feel and by what we are.

With respect to the intellectual cultivation of children, it is very important that the body, mind, and moral sense of the child should proceed in their growth proportionately and *pari passu*:—

"For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk; but as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal." *

*As* this temple waxes let it be; not *before* this temple waxes. Whichsoever of these constituents of the human being, the body, the intellect and the moral sense, shall shoot forth prematurely and in advance of the others, will run a great risk of being nipped and blighted. The intellectual is, of the three—in these times at least—that which is most liable to premature development. The evil consequences of such development have been very generally perceived, and many maxims are afloat against over-education; but the ambition of parents is commonly too strong for their wisdom and prudence, and the over-education proceeds, the maxims notwithstanding. And schools and colleges and all tutors and teachers being governed by the same spirit, it is difficult for a wise parent to give effect to wise

* Hamlet.

views, even when he heartily desires it. One rule, however, it is in his own hands to carry out, and this is, if he talk much to his children, not to talk intellectually. The intellectual talk of adults is apt, not only to stimulate the child's intellect to efforts beyond its strength, but also to overlay many intellectual tastes which have their natural place in childhood and which it is good for every mind to have passed through. It is best for a child that he should admire cordially what he does admire; but if the intellectual tastes and criticisms of the adult mind are brought to bear upon him, he will try to admire what he cannot and fail to admire what he might.

On the other hand, I would not be understood to recommend the sort of jocular nonsense which some intellectual parents will have recourse to in order to place their conversation on a level with a child's understanding; nor do I observe that children are fond of it, or at all flattered by it, but rather the contrary. For it is a mistake to suppose

that any joke is good enough for a child. Intelligent children, if not absolutely fastidious as to jokes, (which certainly all children are as to taste and manners), will not, however, accept as complacently as might be wished, the mere good-natured disposition to make them merry, nor can they respond in the manner that is sometimes expected from them, to every well-meant effort of heavy gambolling and forced facetiousness. Whatever is most simple and natural is most pleasing to a child; and if the parent be not naturally light and gay, he had better be grave with his children, only avoiding to be deep or subtle in discourse.

But however parents may demean themselves, it is not desirable that they and their children should be always together. Children and young people—and I should say even adults—are not the better in their understandings for an exclusive association with their superiors in intellect. Such association should be occasional, not constant. The inferior mind so associated may possibly

not be of a nature to be over-excited and over-wrought; it may be safe from those evils through defect of spontaneous force and activity: but in that case another evil arises; it is led to adopt its opinions instead of thinking them, and finds a short cut to posts to which it would be better that it should fight its way. In the case of a young man who has been brought up in the constant society of a parent greatly superior to himself, it will generally be found that he has come by his opinions, not (as is best in youth) partly through deference to authority, partly through conflict with equals, and partly by spontaneous impulse, but almost entirely by adoption, as if they were certified facts. And this leaves the mind unenlarged and the judgment unexercised.

There is a class of opinions, however,—those connected with the moral and spiritual nature,—which are to be inculcated on a different principle from those which concern merely the cultivation of the intellect. For these are opinions which are not to be valued

merely *as* opinions, but on account of the feelings and affections which are to be incorporated with them. Great as is the importance of true religious doctrine—which is, as it were, the body of religion—it is, nevertheless, an importance subsidiary and derivative; it is derived from the efficacy of true religious doctrine to cherish and protect the growth of genuine religious feeling, which is the soul of religion. The opinions are the organic structure; the feelings are the vital principle. It is for the sake of the feelings that the organisation is so important; and I think, therefore, that religious truths, or what the parent believes to be religious truths, should be presented to children through the conveyance of the feelings for implicit adoption, and not as matters to be wrought out in the understanding. For the primary object, which is to fix the feeling, will be in some measure frustrated—the feeling will be in some measure abated or supplanted—if more thought be called up than the feeling of its own mere motion will naturally generate.

But if the religious beliefs of a child be not founded in his reason, what, it may be asked, will become of them when the credulous simplicity of childhood shall be at an end, and the thinking faculty shall have set itself to work? I answer that whether his beliefs have been founded in reason, or whether they have been founded in love, receiving from reason merely a collateral support, it is probable that if the child be of an active and inquisitive understanding, the beliefs will, at one period or another within childhood or succeeding it, sustain some shock and trial. But those who have taken much note of human nature will have observed, I think, that the reason is the weakest part of it, (God forbid that it should not!) and that the most reasonable opinions are seldom held with much tenacity unless when they have been adopted in the same way as that in which prejudices are adopted; that is when they have been borne in upon the understanding by the feelings. Whilst I think, therefore, that love is that constituent of

faith of which a child's nature is most capable, I also believe it to be that groundwork of faith on which all nature must rest, if it have any resting-place at all; and love, therefore, inspiring the reason, but not reduced to the reason, must be so imparted to the child as to animate the growing and changing forms of doctrine throughout the several stages of childhood; and when childhood shall have been left behind, it is this, and nothing else, that can be relied upon to withstand the rashness of a youthful intellect, flushed by its first discoveries. The struggle will be great at this season in proportion to the largeness of the nature and the force of the elements at work; and if a strong understanding should be too suddenly expanded, it is probable that there will be some disruption of the material fabric of doctrine in which the spiritual feeling has hitherto had its abode. But if the principle of love have been cherished and made strong from the first, the broken forms of doctrine will reunite, and love, with whatever strivings and

wrestlings, will find an organic faith in which to set up its rest, and secure itself from accidents of the intellect, as well as from whatsoever the world can do against it. And in most cases (though not in all unhappily) the faith will be the more strongly founded for the conflict in which it has been engaged. It was by Eros and Eris, by Love and Strife, that Order was brought out of Chaos.

"I can just remember," says a theologian of the last century, "when the women first taught me to say my prayers, I used to have the idea of a venerable old man, of a composed, benign countenance, with his own hair, clad in a morning gown of a grave-coloured flowered damask, sitting in an elbow chair."* And he proceeds to say, that in looking back to these beginnings, he is in no way disturbed at the grossness of his infant theology. The image thus shaped by the imagination of the child was in truth merely one example of the various forms and con-

* Lights of Nature and Gospel Blended, ch. iii., s. 1.

ceptions, fitted to divers states and seasons and orders and degrees of the religious mind whether infant or adult, which represent the several approximations such minds, or minds at such seasons, can respectively make to the completeness of faith. These imperfect ideas should be held to be reconciled and comprehended in that completeness, not rejected by it; and the nearest approximation which the greatest of human minds can accomplish is surely to be regarded as much nearer to the imperfection of an infantine notion than to the fulness of truth. The gown of flowered damask and the elbow chair may disappear; the anthropomorphism of childhood may give place to the divine incarnation of the Second Person in after years; and we may come to conceive of the Deity as Milton did when his epithets were most abstract:

"So spake the SOVRAN PRESENCE."

But after all, these are but different grades of imperfection in the forms of doctrinal faith;

and if there be a devouter love on the part of the child for what is pictured in his imagination as a venerable old man, than in the philosophic poet for the "Sovran Presence," the child's faith has more of the efficacy of religious truth in it than the poet's and philosopher's. What we have to take care of in the religious training of a child is, that the love shall be indestructible and permanent; so that in all the transmutations of doctrine which after years may bring, from the palpable picturings of Tucker's infant imagination to the "Three Incomprehensibles" of St. Athanasius, he may preserve the same religious heart; and whatever other knowledge, or supposed knowledge, shall supervene, may still "know that there is nothing better than the fear of the Lord, and that there is nothing sweeter than to take heed unto the commandments of the Lord." *

* Ecclesiasticus, xxiii. 27.

## THE LIFE POETIC.

LET it not be too contemplative for action, nor too active to afford room and space for contemplation. The tendency of our times is to bring every man of eminent abilities into great outward activity, and thereby perhaps in some cases to dam up and divert to the turning of this mill or that, the stream which should have flowed unbroken "*in omne volubilis ævum*," and made itself a mirror to nature. But it may happen to a man of genius, conscious of this tendency of the age, to throw himself too much into the opposite extreme. His leanings should be towards retirement, no doubt; but he should indulge them, though largely, yet still with a measured freedom, not a total abandonment.

> "Fountain heads and pathless groves,
> Places which pale passion loves" *—

should be, without question, his favourite haunts: but he is not to forget that for the cultivation of the highest order of poetry, it is necessary that he should be conversant with life and nature at large, and

> "Know all qualities with a learned spirit
> Of human dealings"†—

that his poetry should spring out of his life, and that his life should abound in duties as well as in contemplations.

For that poetic vision which is the vision of the introverted eye alone, has but a narrow scope: and observation comes of action, and most of that action which is the most responsible. And if it be true that "a man's mind is sometimes wont to tell him more than seven watchmen that sit above in an high tower," ‡ it is also true that that man will hear most of all, who hearkens to his own mind and to the seven watchmen

* Fletcher. † Shakspeare.

‡ Ecclesiasticus, xxxvii. 14.

besides; whilst what he hears will turn to knowledge, and will be fixed, amplified, and defined, in proportion as there are deeds and consequences to follow, and sweet or bitter fruits. He is but a child in knowledge, however versed in meditation, who has not to act, to suffer, and to teach, as well as to inquire and to learn. If a meditative man be used to be taken about a city in a carriage or led about it by a friend, it will be long before he knows his way in it; but not so if he have to go about in it by himself, still less if he have to lead another.

If, then, a poet would entitle himself to take the highest rank in his art,—to be numbered, that is, amongst the "poets *sage*," he should be, to a moderate extent, mixed up with the affairs of life. His mind should be not a vessel only, but a vat. His wisdom should be a tried and stirring wisdom. His speculations should emanate from facts and events, and his poetry should have its roots in the common earth.

But it is difficult to say how this convers-

ancy with men and affairs is to be attempted in these times, without losing hold of the contemplative life altogether, and becoming involved in the inordinate activities of the age. If a profession be adopted, there is hardly any which leaves a moderate degree of leisure, except to men of inferior abilities. Men of eminent abilities embarked in a profession, are placed under obligations of exertion which they cannot escape. In trade, strenuous efforts are enforced upon a man by the pressure of competition; and trading occupations are perhaps in other respects unsuited to a poet. Political life is not open to him unless circumstances be favourable; and to a man who is alert and excitable, (as a poet must be supposed to be), it will prove too violent a diversion from poetic pursuits; and this, not from the nature of the business only, but because it commonly leads a man of quick sympathies (which again must be supposed in the poet's case,) into a good deal of social dissipation. "If life," says Cowley,

"If life should a well-ordered poem be,
(In which he only hits the white
Who joins true profit with the best delight,)
The more heroic strain let others take,
Mine the Pindaric way I 'll make:
The matter shall be grave, the numbers loose and free."

This liberty of life can not, I think, in these days—and in the case of a man of eminent abilities—be secured, if a man be confined to any of the established ruts in which life is made to run.

If, then, neither professional, commercial, nor political life will sort well with the life poetic, there remains little besides casual employments and the duties which accrue in every station, to supply a poet with the quota of action required for his purposes. These, however, may suffice, if they be sedulously pursued. The poor are always with us, and their affairs fall fitly into the hands of educated men who have no professional avocations. Let the poet be a man of fortune and the duties of a landlord are incumbent upon him, whilst those of a magistrate lie before him, with the whole field of county

business. If he be not a proprietor, yet one place he must occupy—that of a parishioner, with parochial functions; and the vestry will present, to an observant eye, as instructive an exponent of human nature, with pretty nearly the same variety of features, as the Lords spiritual and temporal, with Her Majesty's faithful Commons in Parliament assembled. Nor is the business of a parish to be regarded as unworthy the diligent attention of a man of genius. It is not impossible that, from time to time, it may require the same species of ability as the business of an empire, and exercise the same faculties in its adjustment; for the amount of prudence and sagacity needful for the successful transaction of business depends comparatively little on the scale of operation. Sometimes, indeed, the larger the scale the easier the task.

Furthermore, a man of judgment and ability will find, as he advances in life, that the duties of friendship and relationship will multiply upon him more than upon men of

inferior capacity, if only he be found willing to discharge them. And if he shall attain to eminence as a poet, that, like every other species of eminence, will bring with it no inconsiderable demands upon his activity. To these may be added—if they should fall in his way—casual and temporary employments in the public service, taking care, however, not to let that service fix itself upon him and suck the blood out of his poetic veins. Milton had employments of this nature; and before he should hold himself equipped for his great enterprise in poetry, he deemed it indispensable that to "industrious and select reading" should be added "steady observation" and "insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs."* Spenser and Cowley had such employments also; and many others might be named, were they worthy to be named after these.

But if a poet shall fail to find any field for external activity which would admit

* Reason of Church Government, Book 2nd.

also of leisure and retirement, or if he shall have an invincible repugnance to an outward life, (which may not unnaturally be his predicament), then it behooves him the more to place his life under a well-devised discipline, in order that it may be, if not externally active, yet orderly and sedulous. For by how much a man shall reserve himself to a contemplative life, by so much will he need a more constant and watchful self-regulation in the conduct of it; and by so much, also, will the task of self-regulation be difficult and severe. The regimen of external circumstance and of obligations contracted to others, is an aid which only a strong man can dispense with in the ordering of his days and hours; and moreover, if the course of the hours is to be governed wholly from within and *pro re natâ* as it were, there will be some danger of self-government being accompanied by too much of self-occupation.

Nor is it to be forgotten that the man who lies under no external obligation (none that is apparent and palpable) to occupy himself

in one way or another, will become a prey to many demands for small services, attentions and civilities, such as will neither exercise his faculties, add to his knowledge, nor leave him to his thoughts. The prosecution of a contemplative life is not an answer to any of these demands; for though the man who is in the pursuit of an active calling is not expected to give up his guineas for the sake of affording some trifling gratification to some friend or acquaintance or stranger, yet the man who has renounced the active calling and the guineas in order that he may possess his soul in peace, is constantly expected to give up his meditations, and no one counts it for a sacrifice. Meditation, it is thought, can always be done some other day. A man without something indispensable to do, will find his life to be involved in some of the difficulties by which a woman's life is often beset, one of which difficulties is the want of a claim paramount upon her time. And these difficulties will not be the less if the poet have, as he ought to have, something

of the woman in his nature;—as he ought to have, I aver; because the poet should be *hic et hæc homo*—the representative of human nature at large and not of one sex only. With the difficulties of a woman's life, the poet will not find that any of its corresponding facilities accrue; he will find claims to be made upon him as upon a man, and no indemnities granted to him as a poet. Thus it is that in the bustling crowds of this present world, a meditative man finds himself, however passively disposed, in a position of oppugnancy to those around him, and must struggle in order to stand still.

But even if a poet devoted wholly to retirement, should be able to seclude himself from petty and unprofitable interruptions, he would still be the better for methodising his life by some severity of self-restraint. Meditation is a wild business when there is nothing else to be done. An excitable mind will wander and waste itself if it be unenclosed; and nothing needs to be intermitted more than the exercise of the imaginative

faculties. I have heard a man of ardent religious feelings declare that his devotions were more lively and spiritual after a day of business than in a day consecrated to devotional exercises; and in like manner it may happen with a poet that there shall be more freshness and vigour in the contemplations which spring up after compression than in those which are the predetermined occupation of the day.

Next to conversancy with life and affairs, a poet should cultivate a conversancy with external nature. The cultivation, indeed, will come of itself, if his life be led where nature is favourably presented to him; and not where it is soiled and obscured, as in the smoky parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire, or built out, as in great cities. If, however, circumstances should oblige him to live in a city, occasional visits to the country may still do much for him—in some cases, perhaps, even as much as constant residence. The loss of continual intercourse with Nature is, no doubt, a great loss to those who have an ever-

flowing love and a never-failing admiration of her; which are, indeed, supreme amongst poetical gifts: but on the other hand, if there be some shortcomings in this kind, the benefits of continual residence will bear a less proportion to those of occasional intercourse. What we see rarely is seen with an access of enjoyment which quickens observation and brightens recollection; and if the susceptibilities need to be stimulated, the stimulation will redound more from what is fresh than from what is familiar.

Mr. Tennyson has described—as he only could—a sort of semi-seclusion, which would seem to combine all that a poet could want to favour his intercourse with nature and with his kind:

"Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love:
News from the humming city comes to it
In sound of funeral or of marriage bells;
And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you hear
The windy clanging of the minster clock;
Although between it and the garden lies
A league of grass, washed by a slow, broad stream,

That, stirred with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge,
Crowned with the minster-towers." *

It must be acknowledged, however, that the greatest English Poets of past times did undoubtedly live much in London; and of those, he who excelled most in the treatment of external nature composed his best descriptions from the images retained in his imagination when the knowledge of nature was at one entrance quite shut out.

In our own times the greatest poets have lived in the country; but indeed they had good reasons for doing so, independently of intercourse with nature. For the social life of cities is much changed from what it was two hundred years ago. In London, in the present times, an eminent man is beset with a multiplicity of social enjoyments and excitements, the very waste-pipes of genial sensibility; and the poet's imagination, instead of forming a fund to be continually deepened and widened by influx from secret sources, is

* The Gardener's Daughter.

diffused and spread abroad and speedily dried up. Such, at least, is the case with those eminent men who are lively in discourse or cordial and courteous in demeanour. Others, perhaps, invested with an adequate unpopularity, may be in little danger. "Me, though blind," says a poet who seems not to have perceived the perils of social popularity till they had passed by him,—

> "Me, though blind,
> God's mercy spared, from social snares with ease
> Saved by that gracious gift, inaptitude to please."

But social repulsiveness has its evils too, when fully brought out in a metropolitan life: the garb of hedgehog skins, though a coat of proof, may be turned outside in, and not worn with the equanimity with which that sort of garment is said to have been worn by the Saint. Whether, therefore, the poet be socially unacceptable, or be courted, flattered and caressed, but most in the latter case, London, in these times, is not the place in which his faculties will be most favourably developed.

And a due appreciation of the temptations

to which a poet is exposed by popular admiration and the courtings and wooings of social life, may lead us to juster views than are, I think, generally entertained of the ways in which genius and art are to be cherished by nations and governments. There is much complaint made by the admirers of arts and literature, that their professors are not sufficiently advanced and honoured by the State and by mankind. In my estimation they are honoured more than is good either for themselves or for their calling. Good for mankind it may be to admire whatever is admirable in genius or art; but as to the poet himself, a very moderate extent of favourable acceptance in his own times is all that can be beneficial to him either as a man or as an artist. He is by temperament but too excitable; with him the *vita umbratilis* is essential to repose and self-possession; and it is from repose and self-possession,—

"Deep self-possession, an intense repose—" *

* Coleridge.

that all genuine emanations of poetic genius proceed. To the poet, solitude itself is an excitement, into which none that is adventitious should intrude: the voices which come to him in solitude should not be mixed with acclamations from without; and the voices which proceed from him should not be confounded by the amiable intrusion of their own echoes, apt, when quickly reverberated, to be too intently listened for.

It is true that he must have some more or less conscious anticipation of sympathy to come; he must feel that his voice will not be as the voice of one crying in the desert, but that his just thoughts, his glorious visions, his passions, and "the high reason of his fancies," will, in their due time of maturity, and after so many revolutions of the seasons as are needful for the ripening of such results, reach the hearts of multitudes, and find an echo in the ages that are unborn. But these anticipations of what is distant are not of a nature to agitate or disturb the mind in its self-communion. They serve to animate his

lighter efforts, and they support him in his severer labours and more strenuous studies; but they do not dissipate or distract the mind. It is far otherwise in respect to contemporaneous and immediate admiration; and I doubt whether any high endeavour of poetic art ever has been or ever will be promoted by the stimulation of popular applause.

Still less would poetic art be advanced by rewards in the shape of civil honours and distinctions; and the proposals which have been made for so rewarding it betray, when they are examined, the inconsistency of the views on which they are founded. It would probably be admitted by their authors that poetic art should not be accounted in any respect inferior to military or political art. Yet has any one entertained the notion of assigning to the greatest poet of an age, civil honours and distinctions tantamount to those which are assigned to the greatest soldier or politician? The creation of a Duke of Rydal, with an appanage of 10,000*l.* a year, is not the sort of measure which has been

suggested, and probably there is no one who would not acknowledge it to be absurd. Yet it could be hardly more absurd than the assignment to our greatest poets, of titular distinctions, which, being the highest that are proposed as a reward of poetic genius, are yet amongst the lowest that would be considered worthy the acceptance of a meritorious general officer or a serviceable county member. The truth is that civil honours and titular distinctions are altogether unfit for great poets; who, being but two or three in a century, are to be distinguished by the rarity of their kind.

With regard to pensions, were they intended merely as honorary rewards, they would be open to the same objections. If they were supposed to have reference to the dignity of the calling, such pensions as are given to Lord Chancellors and Ambassadors should pitch the scale, rather than such as are given to Clerks and Collectors of Customs. But they are assigned upon different principles, and their sufficiency is to be brought to

another test. In treating of the life which a poet ought to lead, I have left out of the account one material question,—whether it be such a life as it is likely that he will be able to lead. And as there is no reason to suppose him one of the few who are born to a competency, the renunciation which I have recommended of all professional and commercial pursuits, and also of all public employments except such as are casual and temporary, may well suggest the inquiry in what manner he is to be maintained? Not, certainly, on the profits of poetry; for unless he apply himself merely to please and pamper, and not to elevate or instruct, his poetry will do little indeed towards procuring him a subsistence; it will probably not even yield him such a return as would suffice to support a labouring man for one month out of the twelve. This has been the case with the greatest poets, if not during the whole, at least during the greater part of their lives; and even when their poetry has attained to what may be called popularity, it is still a

popularity which extends only to the cultivated, as distinguished from the merely educated classes, and does not bring with it any very profitable sale.

If poetry, then, be unavailable, will the poet be enabled to subsist by the aid of prose? This will probably be his best resource; but even prose will fail to return a profit, unless it be written for the market. Having been almost the only resource of one who was at once an eminent poet, and in general literature the most distinguished writer of his age, Mr. Southey, his example may be fairly adduced as showing what can be made of it under the most favourable circumstances. By a small pension and the office of laureate (yielding together about 200*l.* per annum), he was enabled to insure his life, so as to make a moderate posthumous provision for his family; and it remained for him to support himself and them, so long as he should live, by his writings. With unrivalled industry, infinite stores of knowledge, extraordinary talents, a delightful style, and the devotion of about

one-half of his time to writing what should be marketable rather than what he would have desired to write, he defrayed the cost of that frugal and homely way of life which he deemed to be the happiest and the best. So far it may be said that all was well; and certainly never was man more contented with a humble lot than he. But at sixty years of age he had never yet had one year's income in advance; and when between sixty and seventy his powers of writing failed, had it not been for the timely grant of an additional pension,* his means of subsistence would have failed too. It was owing to this grant alone that the last years of a life of such literary industry as was the wonder of his time, were not harassed by pecuniary difficulties; and at his death the melancholy spectacle was presented, of enormous preparations thrown away, one great labour of his life half-finished, and other lofty designs which had been cherished in his heart of

* Through the care of Sir R. Peel.

hearts from youth to age, either merely inchoate or altogether unattempted.*

We mourn over the lost books of Tacitus and Pliny, and rake in the ruins of Herculaneum to recover them; but 300*l.* a-year—had it been given in time—might have realized for us works, over the loss of which our posterity may perhaps mourn as much or more!

> "Things incomplete, and purposes betrayed,
> Make sadder transits o'er Truth's mystic glass,
> Than noblest objects utterly decayed." †

If one moiety of Mr. Southey's time—applied to procure, by marketable literature, the means of subsistence—is found to leave such miserable results as these, it may easily be imagined what fortune would attend the efforts in marketable prose (always assuming

* I will allow myself to note here, whether or not it be to the purpose, that the only son of the author of the Book of the Church—a most active and exemplary clergyman with a large family—is left (unavoidably perhaps, but the well-wishers of the Church must surely wish that it *could* be avoided) to struggle with the world, (which he does in a spirit of manly contentedness worthy of his father,) on a hard-working poverty-stricken curacy.

† Wordsworth.

them, of course, to be good and worthy, and not the mere suppliance of the literary toy-shop) of a man of like poetical gifts, but not endowed with the same grace and facility in composition, the same unwearied industry and almost unexampled productiveness.

Pensions to poets, then, in such cases—and, indeed, pensions to all writers, poetical or other, in the higher and graver and therefore less popular and lucrative walks of literature—may be deemed, I think, though not appropriate as honours or rewards, yet desirable, as providing a subsistence which may not be attainable in other ways without great injury to the interests of literature. The provision should be suited to the retired and homely way of life by which the true dignity of a poet will be best sustained and in which his genius will have its least obstructed development; but it should be a provision calculated—if prudently managed—to make his life, in its pecuniary elements, easy and untroubled. I say "if prudently managed," because as to the

wants of a spendthrift poet or of one who is incompetent to the management of his affairs, they are wants which it is hard to measure and impossible to supply. If the pensions now given to men of letters, to scientific men, and to artists, be of such amount as would enable them, living frugally, to give all or most of their time, with an easy mind, to those arts and pursuits by which they may best consult the great and perdurable interests committed by Providence to their charge, then the amount is sufficient, though it be but little; and the fact which is so often brought forward, that it is less than the ordinary emoluments of trades, professions, or the humbler walks of the public service, is not material to the case. If the pensions, on the other hand, be of less amount than will effect this purpose, then I think that the just ground on which the grant of such pensions is to be rested,—that is, the true interests of men of genius themselves, and, through them, the interests of literature and art,—require that

they should be advanced in amount so far as may be sufficient for this purpose, and no further.

It is not only to secure to him the undisturbed possession of his time and the undiverted direction of his endeavours, that it is expedient to make some sufficient pecuniary provision for a poet: such a provision is important also as a safeguard to his character and conduct; for few indeed are the men whose character and conduct are unimpaired by pecuniary difficulties; and though wise men will hardly be involved in such difficulties, let their need be what it may, and though none but a wise man can be a great poet, yet the wisdom of the wisest may be weak in action; it may be infirm of purpose; through emotions or abstractions it may be accessible to one inroad or another; and though I am far from claiming any peculiar indulgence for the infirmities of men of genius—on the contrary in my mind nothing can be more erroneous than to extend indulgence to moral aberrations precisely in those cases in which, operating to

the corruption of the greatest gifts, they are the most malign and pernicious,—yet, for this very reason, whilst refusing them any indult or absolution, I would claim for men of genius all needful protection—more perhaps than ought to be needful—in order that no danger that can be avoided may attend the great national and universal interests involved in their life and character. For never let this truth depart from the minds of poets or of those who would cherish and protect them—that the poet and the man are one and indivisible; that as the life and character is, so is the poetry; that the poetry is the fruit of the whole moral, spiritual, intellectual, and practical being; and howsoever in the imperfection of humanity, fulfilments may have fallen short of aspirations and the lives of some illustrious poets may have seemed to be at odds with greatness and purity, yet in so far as the life has faltered in wisdom and virtue, failing thereby to be the nurse of high and pure imaginations, the poet, we may be sure, has been shorn of

his beams; and whatsoever splendour may remain to him, even though to our otherwise bedarkened eyes wandering in a terrestrial dimness, it may seem to be consummate and the very "offspring of Heaven, first-born," yet it is a reduced splendour and a merely abortive offspring as compared with what it might have been, and with what it is in the bounty of God to create, by the conjunction of the like gifts of high reason, ardent imagination, efflorescence of fancy and intrepidity of impulse, with a heart subdued to Him and a pure and unspotted life. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and out of the life are the issues of poetry.

And the greatest of those poets whose lives, though perhaps less blemished in reality than evil report would have them to be, are certainly not free from reproach, have seen and acknowledged all this, and have known what they have lost. If the little that has come down to us concerning Shakspeare includes somewhat against him, we know also from himself how it was by himself

regarded; and what is to the present purpose, we know that he imputed the evil courses into which he was betrayed to the way of life forced upon him by the want of a competency:—

"Oh, for my sake do thou with Fortune chide;
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To that it works in, like the dyer's hand." *

And we know further, that when he had attained to a competency (would that it had been earlier!) he followed that way of life no longer.

We have now plotted out for the poet a life, contemplative but not inactive, orderly, dutiful, observant, conversant with human affairs and with nature; and though homely and retired, yet easy as regards pecuniary circumstances. But some particulars remain to be added. As his life of contemplation is to be varied by practical activity upon occasion, so

* 111th Sonnet.

should his solitude be varied by occasional companionship. In youth his companions will probably be chosen very much for the sake of their intellectual powers and acquirements; and whilst we are young we are most open to cultivation from such companionship. Afterwards, truth and kindness come to be, if not all in all, yet at least of all qualities the most essential; and to one who, learning from books what books can teach, would desire to make more direct inquisition into the secrets of human nature, it is far less important that companionship should be intellectual than that it should be confidential. The poet being himself frank and unreserved, (as I think poets for the most part will be found to be), should beget frankness and unreserve on the part of his companions, who should come to him for advice and sympathy in all the emergencies of life. "I have got into this or that dilemma or difficulty, what am I to do?" "I have fallen in love with this or that young lady, what will become of me?" "I have been ill-used and betrayed,

shall I forgive it, or shall I resent it?" The poet's companions, making hasty resort to him under such circumstances, the inmost thoughts of their hearts disclosed by the passion of the time, whilst a friendly or perhaps even an impassioned interest is excited in the heart of the poet, the result will be a living knowledge, and a judgment, by as much as it is responsibly and affectionately exercised, by so much the more deeply cultivated. This is the companionship which, being indeed essential to any one who would bring out his better nature and fulfil his duties as a man, is eminently essential to a poet.

There is another companionship to be considered,—that of books. The reading by which Milton proposed to prepare himself to write poetry was, as appears by a passage to which I have already referred, "*select* reading." In these times I think that a poet should feed chiefly (not of course exclusively) on the literature of the seventeenth century. The diction and the movement

of that literature, both in verse and in what Dryden calls "that other harmony," are, in my apprehension, far more fitted than the literature which has followed it, to be used for the training of the mind to poetry. There was no writing public nor reading populace in that age. The age was the worse for that, but the written style of the age was the better. The writers were few and intellectual; and they addressed themselves to learned, or, at least, to studious and diligent readers. The structure of their language is in itself an evidence that they counted upon another frame of mind and a different pace and speed in reading, from that which can alone be looked to by the writers of these days. Their books were not written to be snatched up, run through, talked over and forgotten; and their diction, therefore, was not such as lent wings to haste and impatience, making everything so clear that he who ran or flew might read. Rather it was so constructed as to detain the reader over what was pregnant and profound, and

compel him to that brooding and prolific posture of the mind, by which, if he had wings, they might help him to some more genial and profitable employment than that of running like an ostrich through a desert. And hence those characteristics of diction by which these writers are made more fit than those who have followed them to train the ear and utterance of a poet. For if we look at the long-suspended sentences of those days, with all their convolutions and intertextures — the many parts waiting for the ultimate wholeness — we shall perceive that without distinctive movement and rhythmical significance of a very high order, it would be impossible that they could be sustained in any sort of clearness. One of these writer's sentences is often in itself a work of art, having its strophes and antistrophes, its winding changes and recalls, by which the reader, though conscious of plural voices and running divisions of thought, is not however permitted to dissociate them from their mutual concert and

dependency, but required, on the contrary, to give them entrance into his mind, opening it wide enough for the purpose, as one compacted and harmonious fabric. Sentences thus elaborately constructed, and complex though musical, are not easy to a remiss reader, but they are clear and delightful to an intent reader. Sentences, on the other hand, such as are demanded in these times by the reading commonalty, and written by those who aspire to be their representatives in the republic of letters, lie under little obligation to address themselves to the *ear* of the mind. Sense is to be taken in by so little at a time, that it matters not greatly what sound goes with it; or, at all events, one movement and one tune, which all the world understands, is as much as our sentence can make room for, or our reader will take time for; and as matter and style will ever re-act upon each other, I fear there is a tendency in our popular writers to stop short of that sort of matter to which brief bright sentences are not appropriate and

all-sufficient. However this be, the finer melodies of language will always be found in those compositions which deal with many considerations at once—some principal, some subordinate, some exceptional, some gradational, some oppugnant; and deal with them compositely, by blending whilst they distinguish. And so much am I persuaded of the connection between true intellectual harmony of language and this kind of composition, that I would rather seek for it in an Act of Parliament—if any arduous matter of legislation be in hand—than in the productions of our popular writers, however lively and forcible. An Act of Parliament, in such subject-matter, is studiously written, and expects to be diligently read, and it generally comprises compositions of the multiplex character which has been described. It is a kind of writing, therefore, to which some species of rhythmical movement is indispensable, as any one will find who attempts to draft a difficult and comprehensive enactment, with the omission of all the words

which speak to the ear only, and are superfluous to the sense.

Let me not be misunderstood as presuming to find fault generally and indiscriminately with our modern manner of writing. It may be adapted to its age and its purposes; which purposes, as bearing directly upon living multitudes, have a vastness and momentousness of their own. All that it concerns me to aver is, that the purpose which it will *not* answer is that of training the ear of a poet to rhythmical melodies. And how little it lends itself to any high order of poetical purposes, may be judged by the dreary results of every attempt which is made to apply it to purposes of a cognate character—to prayers, for example, and spiritual exercises. Compare our modern compositions of this kind with the language of the liturgy—a language which, though for the most part short and ejaculatory and not demanding to be rhythmic in order to be understood, partakes, nevertheless, in the highest degree, of the musical expressiveness which

pervaded the compositions of the time. Listen to it in all its varieties of strain and cadence, sudden or sustained,—now holding on in assured strength, now sinking in a soft contrition, and anon soaring in the joyfulness of faith—confession, absolution, exultation, each to its appropriate music, and these again contrasted with the steady statements of the doxologies;—Let us listen, I say, to this language, which is one effusion of celestial harmonies, and compare with it the flat and uninspired tones and flagging movements of those compounds of petition and exhortation (from their length and multifariousness peculiarly demanding rhythmic support) which are to be found in modern collections of prayers for the use of families. I think the comparison will constrain us to acknowledge that short sentences in long succession, however clear in construction and correct in grammar, if they have no rhythmic impulse—though they may very well deliver themselves of what the writer thinks and means —will fail to bear in upon the mind any

adequate impression of what he *feels* — his hopes and fears, his joy, his gratitude, his compunction, his anguish and tribulation; or, indeed, any assurance that he had not merely framed a document of piety, in which he had carefully set down whatever was most proper to be said on the mornings and evenings of each day. These compositions have been, by an illustrious soldier, designated "fancy prayers," and this epithet may be suitable to them in so far as they make no account of authority and prescription; but neither to the fancy nor to the imagination do they appeal through any utterance which can charm the ear.

I come back, then, to the position that a poet should make companions chiefly of those writers who have written in the confidence that their books would be learned and inwardly digested, and whose language was framed for patient and erudite ears and an attitude of the mind like that in which St. Paul listened to Gamaliel, *sitting at his feet.* And I think that he should rather avoid any

habitual resort to books, however delightful in their kind, such as are written in these times and for these times, to catch the fugacious or stimulate the sluggish reader; books such as may be read in the captiousness of haste by a lawyer with an appointment to keep and a watch on the table, or in an inapprehensive weariness by a country gentleman after a day of field sports.

Moreover, by this abstinence, and by a conversancy with elder models in the matter of diction, the poet will be enabled to employ as his own, by the habit which is a second nature, that slightly archaistic colouring of language, which, being removed from what is colloquial and familiar, at the same time that it has no incongruity or unnatural strangeness, is, I think, in these times at least (as by Spenser and others it was deemed to be formerly also), the best costume in which poetry can be clothed, combining what is common to other ages with what is characteristic of its own. At the same time the true poet will be choice and chary, as well as

moderate, in the use of archaisms; by no means detaining or reviving old forms of speech, which, being intrinsically bad, are in a way to be worthily forgotten. The wells of English were not altogether undefiled in any age; and they who aspire to be what poets ought to be, the conservators of language, will proceed, not by obstructing the expurgation of their mother tongue,—a process which, as well as its corruption, is continually on foot,—but by remanding to their more derivative significations, words which are beginning to go astray, and by observing with a keener insight the latent metaphorical fitness or unfitness by which all language is pervaded.

Nor is it to be supposed that the true poet will betray his trust in the conservation of his country's tongue, through any latitude popularly permitted to him for convenience of rhyme or rhythm. For whatever may be meant by those who speak of *poetical license*, that phrase would mislead us much, were we to suppose that the language of poetry is not

required to be precise for the most part, and beyond all other language apt and discriminative. And though this peculiar aptitude will escape many of the poet's readers (if he have many), and much of it will not be recognised at once even by the more skilful few, yet in this, as in other matters of art, it is what can be fully appreciated only by continual study, that will lay the strongest foundations of fame. The "hæc placuit semel" should be, to the poet, of infinitely less account than the "hæc decies repetita placebit:" nor is he worthy of the name of a poet who would not rather be read a hundred times by one reader than once by a hundred.

When that great man of whom I have already made mention, speaks of his life as led in his library and with his books, those to which he adverts as his never-failing friends, are the books of other times; and a poet's feelings as to this companionship could not be more expressively conveyed than in the verses in which he has given them utterance:—

"My days among the dead are past,
Around me I behold
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old;
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

"With them I take delight in weal,
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

"My thoughts are with the dead: with them
I live in long past years;
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears;
And from their lessons, seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

"My hopes are with the dead. Anon
My place with them will be;
And I with them shall travel on
Through all eternity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust."

With regard to the habitual reading of books in foreign languages, whether living languages or other, I, being but very imperfectly acquainted with any but my own, am not

competent to say what would be the effect of it upon a poet's diction and numbers; but this subject is one which would deserve to be investigated by some duly qualified critic. Milton, I think, though he greatly enriched his store of poetical images and materials by his conversancy with Latin, Greek, and Italian books, did yet suffer injury on the other hand in the perverting of his diction to the Latin; his numbers, however, (for numbers are less than diction accessible to foreign influence), remaining unwarped and eminently his country's and his own. Dante had no indigenous literature to assist him in the moulding of his verse, being himself the founder of the Italian as a literate language; and he rebukes, with some severity of disdain, those who were "tam obscenæ rationis," as to magnify the language of their native country above every other. "For myself," he says, "whose country is the world; being native to that as the fish to the sea, though I drank the waters of the Arno before I had a tooth in my head, and have so loved Florence as, by reason

of my love, to undergo an unjust banishment, yet have I holden my judgment subject to my reason rather than to my senses; and as to Florence whence I am sprung, regard it though I may as the place in the world most pleasant to me, yet when I revolve the works of the poets and other writers by whom the world has been described in all its particulars from pole to pole, I am strong and absolute in the opinion, derived from other evidence than that of the senses, that there are regions and cities more delightful and noble than those of Tuscany, and languages better both for their use and their charm than the Latian." *

* "Nam quicunque tam obscenæ rationis est ut locum suæ nationis deliciosissimum credat esse sub sole, huic etiam præ cunctis proprium vulgare licebit, id est maternam locutionem, præponere: . . . . Nos autem, cui mundus est patria velut piscibus æquor, quamquam Sarnum biberimus ante dentes, et Florentiam adeo diligamus ut, quia dileximus, exilium patiamur injuste, ratione magis quam sensu spatulas nostri judicii podiamus: et quamvis ad voluptatem nostram, sive nostræ sensualitatis quietem, in terris amœnior locus quam Florentia non existat, revolventes et poetarum, et aliorum scriptorum volumina, quibus mundus universaliter et membratim describitur, ratiocinantesque in nobis situationes varias mundi locorum et eorum habitudinem

It would be matter of much interest to know from competent critics, how far the operation of these sentiments is to be traced in the fabric of Dante's verse, he having had, as it were, to build it up from the ground; or how far the native genius of the language has ruled supreme. If Milton, however, have accepted foreign aid, and perhaps Dante also, yet Shakespeare is a signal example of the all-sufficiency of national resources; having, with his "small Latin and less Greek," so large and various a vocabulary, it hardly seems possible that any extent of erudition could have bettered it, and a structure of language so flexible and multiform, that it could not have been more so had there been a confluence of twenty tributary tongues at its formation.

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ad utrumque polum et circulum æquatorem, multas esse perpendimus firmiterque censemus, et magis nobiles et magis deliciosas et regiones et urbes, quam Thusciam et Florentiam, unde sum oriundus et civis, et plerasque nationes et gentes delectabiliori atque utiliori sermone uti, quam Latinos."—*De Vulgari Eloquio*, 1—6. I extract the passage, because in translating I have abridged it.

Having considered, if not sufficiently, yet at sufficient length, after what manner a poet is to live, it may be well, before I conclude, to inquire at what period of his life he should deem himself to be prepared for the exercise of his vocation on a large scale. And from the nature of some of the preparations which have been treated of as indispensable, it will plainly appear that this period will not arrive in early youth. For if contemplation, action, conversancy with life and affairs, varied duties, much solitude in its turn, with observation of Nature, and reading select and severe if not extensive, be, as I have deemed them to be, essential requisites for the writing of poetry in its higher and graver kinds, some not inconsiderable tract of matured life must have been travelled through before these fruits can have been gathered. And with this hypothesis our literary history and biography will be found to accord. Milton, at twenty-three years of age, thought that he ripened slowly; and when he supposed himself less happy in that respect than others, doubtless it was

because his own deficiencies were better known to him than theirs:—

"How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen, on his wing, my three-and-twentieth year.
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom sheweth.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
That I towards manhood am arrived so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
Than some more timely happy spirits indueth."

Even in his twenty-ninth year he regarded his poetical efforts (and comparing himself with himself, perhaps, we may say with reason,) as a plucking of the "berries harsh and crude." But the history of poetry at large would show, I think, that Milton's poetical faculties were not of slower growth than those of other poets of the high and intellectual orders; and that at all events the period of the culmination of such poets is in middle life. And with regard to exceptional cases —instances of high achievement at other periods,—whilst a few may be cited as belonging to the periods short of middle life, more illustrious examples still will be found

belonging to periods beyond it. Pope wrote verses with singular grace and dexterity in his early youth: but, on the other hand, Dryden, when he produced the "Alexander's Feast," was in his sixty-seventh year; and "are not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" Goethe may be quoted as an authority as well as an example. When the poet, in the Prologue to the Faust, sighs after his lost youth, his friend reproves him, and whilst admitting that youth is propitious to divers other ends and exercises, declares that, for the purposes of poetry, the elder is the better man:—

"The cunning hand of art to fling
With spirit o'er the accustom'd string;
To seem to wander, yet to bend
Each motion to the harmonious end:
Such is the task our ripened age imposes,
Which makes our day more glorious ere it closes."*

Nor is it only the poetry of the highest intellectual order which is better written

* Lord F. Egerton's translation.

after youth than in youth. Even for amorous poetry, there is a richer vein than that of youth's temperament, and a more attractive art than youth can attain to. Let the masters of erotic verse be mustered, and it will appear, I think, that few or none of them wrote consummately in early youth, whilst the best of them gave utterance to their best strains long after they had sung their "*Vixi Puellis.*" The sense of proportion, which is required equally in the lighter as in the graver kinds of poetry, is naturally imperfect in youth, through undue ardour in particulars; and no very young poet will be content to sacrifice special felicities to general effect. Nor can there well exist, at an early period of life, that rare and peculiar balance of all the faculties, which, even more perhaps than a peculiar force in any, constitutes a great poet:—the balance of reason with imagination, passion with self-possession, abundance with reserve, and inventive conception with executive ability.

On the whole, therefore, it is not desirable that a poet should prosecute any great enterprise in early youth; nor is it likely that his lighter efforts will be worth much. Nevertheless, it is the period for practice and exercise; and a poet must and will write much verse in youth, and he will be much the better for it; nor will he write it with the purpose of throwing it away. If he be affected with the usual impatience of an ardent temperament in early life, it will perhaps be best for him to publish; for till he have rid himself of this impatience, he will not go to work with an ambition sufficiently long-sighted, and a steady preference of ulterior to early results. And publication, if unsuccessful, (as the juvenile publications of great poets are almost sure to be), is a sedative of much virtue and efficacy in such cases. "Be not ambitious of an early fame," says Mr. Landor, "for such is apt to shrivel and drop under the tree." Early success puts an end to severe study and strenuous endeavour;

whereas early failure in those in whom there is genuine poetic genius, and what commonly accompanies it—

"Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse—"*

acts as a sort of narcotic stimulant, allaying impatience, but quickening the deeper mind.

The outset of a poet's life, and the conduct of it "*nel mezzo del cammin*"—the seasons in which his poetry is sown and reaped—are most important to the interests of the art and of mankind. The manner in which it shall be drawn to a close, may be supposed to be important chiefly to the poet himself: yet it is not altogether so; and a few words may not be wasted in speaking of that latter autumn of a poet's life which succeeds his harvest-home. With poets whose life reaches its three-score-years-and-ten, this will be a period of some years' duration. For the fact that by some great poets some short poetical efforts have been hazarded in old age with

* Wordsworth.

eminent success, should not certainly lead to the conclusion that an old man should occupy himself in adding to the bulk of his poetical works, (especially if already voluminous), when he can no longer hope to enhance their rateable and specific value. It is important to every poet to keep his works within compass. Moreover, the intensities of life should be allowed to come to their natural close some steps short of the grave; and passionate writing should not be extended over this period, even if the imagination have not ceased to be impassioned. There are other ways, at once congenial with the poetic life and consentaneous with its decline, in which the activities that remain may be gently exercised, when the passion has been laid to rest. The long education of a poet's life (for as long as he lives he should learn) will have enabled him to detect, at the end of it, many faults in his writings which he knew not of before; and there will be many faults, also, of which he *was* cognisant,

but which, in the eagerness of his productive years, he had not found leisure or inclination to amend. In his old age, as long as the judgment and the executive power over details shall be unimpaired,—as long as the *hand* shall not have lost its cunning,—the work of correction may be carried on to completeness, and the poet's house be put in order. Some caution will be requisite. Age is prone to fastidiousness; and if the poet can no longer go along with the ardours of his younger years, he should take care lest he quench them with too cold a touch. Age, too, is vacillating; and if he have lost his clearness and decisiveness of choice, he should not deal with any delinquencies of his younger verse except those which are flagrant; and in all his corrections, indeed, the presumption should be in favour of the first draft, which should have the benefit of the doubt if there be one; otherwise the works may be the worse for the last hand. But, subject to these conditions, there seems

to be no employment better suited to the old age of a poet, than that of purifying and making less perishable that which he trusts may be the earthly representative of his immortal part. For such purpose and in so far forth, he may permit himself, even at a period when "the last infirmity" should be on its last legs, to be occupied with himself and his fame. But when his own works are as he would wish to leave them, nothing of that which is peculiar to him as a poet and not common to him as a man, will so well become his latter days, as to look beyond himself and have regard to the future fortunes of his art involved in the rising generation of poets. It should be his desire and his joy to cherish the lights by which his own shall be succeeded, and, perhaps, outshone. The personal influence of an old poet upon a young one—youth and age being harmonised by the sympathies of the art—may do what no writings can, to mould those spirits by which, hereafter, many are to be moulded; and as the reflex of a glori-

ous sunset will sometimes tinge the *eastern* sky, the declining poet may communicate to those who are to come after him, not guidance only, but the very colours of his genius, the temper of his moral mind, and the inspiration of his hopes and promises. That done, or ceasing to be practicable through efflux of light, it will only remain for the poet to wait in patience and peace,

"While night
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays." *

* Paradise Lost.

Page viii. line 11, of the Preface.—*For more than twenty years I have been in the habit of noting these results, as they were thrown up, when the facts and occurrences that gave rise to them were fresh in my mind.*

Some of the notes I have spoken of were originally made in verse; others were, from time to time, converted into verse, to serve the purposes of dramatic or poetic works in progress or in contemplation; and I have not hesitated to quote the verses in illustration of the prose as often as the versified form seemed to give a reflection or an aphorism a better chance of finding a resting-place in the memory of the reader.

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